



# THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

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## THE LIBERTY BOYS' DECOY; OR, BAITING THE BRITISH

By HARRY MOORE.



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## CHAPTER I.

### THE JUMPING CONTEST.

"Hello! What's going on here, I wonder?"

"I don't know."

"Looks like they were having some sport, doesn't it?"

"Yes; or else it is a jumping contest."

"They are certainly jumping."

"Yes; and—there, that fellow made a pretty good jump, or I miss my guess."

"He did seem to make quite a jump, didn't he!"

"Yes."

"They are better jumpers than one would expect."

"That's right; but they are not in it with you, Dick. Say, just for the fun of the thing, go into the affair and show them how it is done!"

"I have half a mind to."

"Do it; it will be great sport. And then we may make some acquaintances and learn something that will be of value."

"True; well, I guess I'll do it."

It was a beautiful afternoon in September, of the year 1779. The place was a point about ten miles northeast from Savannah, Georgia, in the edge of the timber which bordered the Savannah River. Two bronzed but handsome, bright-looking youths of perhaps twenty years were riding along the road, and on turning a bend had come in sight of something which had attracted their attention and which caused the conversation above given.

At one side of the road, fifty yards distant, was a group of men, women and children, while in the foreground were perhaps six or seven young men, with hats and coats off, and these young men were competing with one another in running broad jump contest. It was evident that the last fellow who jumped had made a good jump, for there were cries of delight from the spectators and a great clapping of hands.

Just at this moment the two youths rode up and came to stop. "How do you do, ladies and gentlemen?" remarked

the youth who had been called Dick by his companion.

"How are you to-day?"

"How air ye, young fellers?" replied a rough, burly but good-natured-looking man, bustling forward. "We air all well, an' hope ye air?"

"Oh, yes," with a smile, "we are well—but what is going on here, anyway?"

"Whut's goin' on heer?"

"Yes."

"Waal, young feller, this heer is er jumpin' contest."

"A jumping contest, eh?"

"Yas."

"Ah, to decide the championship of this part of the country, I suppose?"

The man shook his head. "Waal, not thet in purtickler," he replied; "ye see——"

"Say," broke in the other youth, "let my friend, here, enter the contest. He's a good jumper."

The man looked at the youths in surprise, and then looked around at the seven youths who had been jumping, in a questioning way, as much as to ask what they thought regarding the matter.

One—it was the fellow who had jumped last—shook his head. "I don't think et is fair, Mister Hunker, ter let enny-buddy else inter this—an' 'speshully a outsider."

But the other six seemed to think different. "Let him in!" they said. "Let him jump ef he wants ter!"

The man hesitated and looked at the young stranger closely. "Kin ye jump purty good?" he asked.

"Oh, I jump fairly well," was the careless reply.

"Jump sixteen or mebbey seventeen feet?"

"Yes, I can jump that distance."

The man still hesitated, while the people present and the competitors watched and listened eagerly. "Afore I answurs ye wun way er another," the man said, "I hed better tell ye whut this heer jumpin' is erbout."

"I suppose that will be a good idea."

The man turned and pointed to where a girl sat on a log; she was not a bad-looking girl, and was dressed up in what



were evidently her best clothes. Near her, but standing, were half a dozen more girls.

"Ye see ther gal settin' on ther log?" the man asked.

The young man nodded. "I see her," he replied.

"Waal, thet is my darter Molly."

"Indeed?"

"Yas; an' now, ye see these heer seven young men who hev be'n doin' this heer jumpin'?"

"I see them."

"Waal, they haven't be'n jumpin' heer jes' fur fun."

"No?"

"No, sirree; they air meanin' bizness, they air. In fack, ter cut et short an' let ye git an unnerstan'in' uv ther sitterwashun, I will say thet these heer young men air competin' fur ther han' uv my darter Molly!"

The two young men started and looked at each other in surprise. "Oh, you must get into this, Dick!" half whispered the one who had first suggested that his companion compete.

"Are competing for the hand of your daughter, you say?" the young man called Dick asked, in surprise.

"Yas; ye see, et is this way: These young men hev all be'n a-courtin' Molly fur quite er spell, an' she don' know w'ich she likes bes', an' ez she can't marry but wun uv 'em, an' they all wanted 'er, we finery decided ter hev ther young men compeet, an' ther wun ez jumps ther furdest gits Molly."

"Oh, I understand."

"Erzackly; now ye know whut is whut."

"Really, I don't think I had better enter the competition," the young man said.

"W'y not?"

"Well, you see, I haven't been a suitor for your daughter's hand, and I don't even know her, nor she me. We have never even heard of each other before to-day."

"Thet's so, uv course; but come, an' I'll interduce ye, an' then ef she says ez how she is willin' fur ye ter enter ther competition, et'll be all right."

"I think I had better not do so, sir. So I will let the young men fight it out between themselves."

"Come along an' let me interduce ye ter Molly, ennyway, and then ye kin decide."

"Go on, Dick," urged the youth's companion; "this is going to be great sport," he added. "Don't spoil it."

There was a streak of mischief in the make-up of both youths, and so the young man, with a smile on his face, leaped to the ground and accompanied the man to where his daughter sat on the log.

"Molly, I wanter interduce ter ye er young man who

thinks uv enterin' ther comperdition. His name is—hum I furgot ter ax yer name, young feller?" looking at the youth inquiringly.

"My name is Dick Dornley."

"Ah, Dick Dornley, hey? Waal, Mister Dornley, this is my darter, Molly Hunker."

The girl leaped to her feet, and seizing Dick's hand shook it heartily. "Glad ter know ye, Mister Dornley!" she said.

"And I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Mister Hunker," said Dick, politely.

"My, don' he tork nice!" said one of the girls, who stood near, to a companion.

"Yas; an' he's harnsum, too, hain't he?"

"He is, fur er fack! Molly's in luck, hain't she!"

"Yas; I wush't I wuz in 'er shoes!"

"Mister Dornley is thinkin' uv enterin' ther comperdition, Molly," said her father. "Whut d'ye say erbout et?"

The girl started and looked at Dick closely. The youth was rather interested. He wished to see what the girl would say. He soon found that she was just like girls in other parts of the country. She glanced quickly toward the group of young men and then back at the young stranger, and said: "I don' know ye, Mister Dornley. I never seen ye afore, an' I don' think, dad, thet et'd be jes' ther thing to let 'im enter ther contest."

Dick lifted his hat and bowed. "That is all right," he said; "and I think you are right in refusing to permit me to enter the contest."

Mr. Hunker and Dick returned to where the young men stood, and the man told them what Molly had said. The face of one of the seven lighted, and he looked pleased and relieved; but the faces of the others darkened, and it was plain that they were dissatisfied.

"I think he orter be let enter," said one.

"So do I!" from another.

"Me, too!"

All expressed themselves in this fashion, and one added: "Jim, heer, wants et all his own way!"

"No, I don'," was the reply; "ef Molly hed sed fur 'er ter come inter ther contest, I shouldn't a-said er word, but she sez she don' think et'd be right, an' thet orter settle et."

"I think you are right about that," said Dick.

But the six objected. It was evident that they wanted Dick to enter the contest, and he shrewdly guessed the reason. They had all been beaten by the young man who had jumped last, and they were jealous of him and would much rather some outsider should win Molly than that he should do so.



"I think he orter be allowed ter compeet," said one; an' I, fur wun, will raise er row ef he hain't let do et!"

"An' so'll I!" from another.

"Me, too!"

All seemed to be bent on having Dick compete, and, seeing that there would be a fuss if he was not permitted to do so, Mr. Hunker went back to where his daughter sat and had a talk with her. She must have objected pretty strongly, for it was several minutes before her father returned; and, when he did, he said: "Molly hez giv' in, n' sez ther young feller kin compeet, but she sez she don' think et is hardly fa'r."

"I agree with her," said Dick.

The young man who was evidently winner over the other six flashed Dick a grateful look. The others, however, did not seem so well pleased.

"I don' ergree with 'er!" one said.

"Nur me!" from another. "An' ef ther young feller on' compeet, an' Jim Sheppard gits Molly, I'm ergoin' er kick up er rumpus, ye kin bet on et!"

"An' I'm with ye in thet!" from another.

Dick saw a sober look appear on the face of the young man who had been called Jim Sheppard. It was evident that he did not consider the threats of his fellow-competitors as mere idle vaporings.

"I'm afraid that I am going to get that young fellow to trouble," thought Dick; "I didn't intend to do so, and should be sorry if harm came to him through me, so I guess it is my place to see to it that he doesn't come to any harm."

Mr. Hunker looked worried, and turned toward Dick, with a troubled face. "I guess ye'd better enter ther contest, Mister Dornley," he said; "ther boys won' be satersed onless ye do, an' et'll be better nor fur ter hev er rumpus w'en et is all over."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Dick; "I will enter the contest if I am permitted, and in case I should win, I'll do as I please about accepting the girl."

"I don' see ez theer is enny objectshuns ter thet," said the man.

The young men looked as if they thought there might be objections, but they probably decided that no one would think of refusing to accept Molly, and finally said they would be all right. They judged Dick by themselves.

"Then you agree to that, do you?" asked Dick.

"Yes," replied one, and the others said the same.

"Very well; then I will compete."

Everybody was interested and excited as soon as the news went around that the young stranger was going to

enter the jumping competition. Many thought that he would give a good account of himself. There was something in his air that impressed one that way.

Dick's companion had already leaped to the ground and tied the horses, and now the two advanced to where the jumps had been made and looked the situation over.

"How many feet is that longest jump?" Dick asked.

"Eighteen feet, seven inches," was the reply of a young man who held a stick with feet and inches marked on it.

"That is a pretty good jump."

"Yas, et is, fur er fack. Think ye kin beat et?"

"I don't know, but I'll try."

The young man who had made the jump, Jim Sheppard, looked at Dick anxiously and the youth met his gaze frankly, and smiled. Jim hardly knew what the look and smile meant. "Blazes! I'm erfraided ther feller kin beat thet jump!" he said to himself, "an' et's ther bes' I kin do—in fack, I never jumped thet fur before, by two inches, an' I couldn't jump an inch further ef my life depended on et. I hope he kain't beat et, but I'm erfeerd he kin!"

Dick threw off his hat and coat, walked back perhaps twenty paces, measured the distance to be traversed, with his eyes, and then, leaping forward, ran with the swiftness of a deer, and, taking off at the mark, shot forward like a stone from a catapult. When he alighted it was seen that he had beaten the best jump made prior to his by a good margin. The man with the measuring-pole hastened to measure the jump, and then cried out: "He hez jumped nineteen feet an' seven inches!"

"Just a foot further than Jim!" one of the other contestants exclaimed exultantly.

Jim uttered a stifled groan. "Molly hain't fur me!" he said to himself; "ther stranger hez won 'er!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE RESULT OF THE CONTEST.

"Ye've won, young feller!" exclaimed Mr. Hunker. "Thet is, onless Jim kin beat yer jump—wich I doubts. D'ye wanter try, Jim?"

The young man shook his head, a sad look on his face. "Et wouldn't be no use," he said; "I kain't jump no funder'n whut I alreddy hev jumped."

"None uv ther res' uv ye keer erbout tryin' erg'in, I s'pose?" to the others.



They shook their heads. "No, we hed alreddy done our bes'," said one, and the others nodded to signify that it was the same with all of them.

"All right, then; thet settles et," said Mr. Hunker, and he turned to Dick. "Come erlong," he said; "we'll go an' see whut Molly hez ter say erbout et."

Dick donned his coat and hat and he accompanied the man. As they walked toward where the girl sat Mr. Hunker said: "I'm satersfied with ye, young feller, but I don' know how et'll be with Molly. I think she rayther likes Jim Sheppard, an' ef et hedn't be'n fur er leetle quarrel they hed over sumthin' er other, she'd a-'cepted 'im long ergo, an' theer wouldn't hev be'n no compertition like this; but now et is all over, an' kain't be he'ped; though, ez I sed, I think she likes Jim."

"How is he—a pretty nice fellow?"

"Jim? Oh, yes, he's er fine feller, an'll hev er good farm, wun uv these heer days."

"He would have been satisfactory to you as a son-in-law, then?"

"Oh, yas!"

"Good! I'm glad to hear that." They were now in front of the girl.

"Waal, Molly, heer is yer futoor husban'," said Mr. Hunker; "he beat 'em all er jumpin', an' done et fa'r an' squar', too."

Dick stepped forward and said: "Miss Molly, will you step to one side with me? I wish to have a little talk with you."

"Sartinly," the girl replied; but she turned pale as she realized that the contest was over, and Jim Sheppard had not won.

She rose and walked to one side with Dick, while the eyes of all were on the two. No doubt many wondered what the youth wished to say. When they were out of earshot of the people Dick said: "Miss Molly, your father tells me that he thinks you wanted Jim Sheppard to win. Was that the case?"

The girl hesitated and then said: "Yas, thet's so."

"Then you like Jim?"

The girl blushed. "Yas, I—I like 'im," she admitted.

"Better than you do either of the other young men?"

"Yas."

"And, tell me, you knew that Jim was a better jumper than the rest when you agreed to have the matter settled by a jumping contest, did you not?"

The girl nodded. "Yas, I knowed et," she acknowledged.

"And you don't care for me, of course."

The girl gave Dick a close look. "Waal," she said

slowly, "ef ye hed come erlong afore ever I took er notice ter Jim et might a-be'n thet I c'u'd er-liked ye, fur air good-lookin' ernuff; but, ye see, likin' Jim ez I do kain't very well keer fur ye."

"True; that is what I thought; and as I already have a sweetheart, I'll tell you what I will do."

"Whut?" asked the girl, eagerly, her face brightening.

"I will step aside and turn you over to Jim, who would have won you had it not been for me."

A happy light appeared in the girl's eyes. "Oh, ef e on'y would!" she cried.

"I will. I am going to do so. Come, and I will announce the fact to the people."

They made their way back to the log, and the girl took a seat, while Dick mounted the log beside her, and, staring erect, raised his hand to attract the attention of the crowd and called out:

"Attention, everybody! As you all know, I won Molly Hunker in the jumping contest; but I have just had a conversation with her and she tells me that she doesn't care for me. And as I am not desirous of getting married, in fact, would not have entered the contest had I not. If a measure been forced to do so, I have decided to step aside and let the second best jumper, Mr. Jim Sheppard, have Miss Molly." At the conclusion of this little speech Dick bowed, and a shout went up from the score of people within hearing.

It looked as if the words of the young stranger were pleasing to the majority, but the six defeated candidates for the hand of Molly were not satisfied, as could be seen by the angry look on their faces.

"This way, Jim!" called out Dick, motioning to the young man, who hastened to obey. "Take her hand," the youth said, and Jim stepped forward and took Molly's hand, the girl rising and standing up as he approached. Jim was red in the face and embarrassed-looking, as was Molly also, but both looked happy.

"Take her, and that you may both be happy is my sincere wish, Jim!" said Dick, earnestly.

"Thank ye!" said Jim. "I guess we'll both be happy, hey, Molly?" with a grin.

"I guess so, Jim," was the reply.

"Kiss, and seal the matter for good and all!" cried the youth who had accompanied Dick to the place, and who had suggested that he enter the contest.

Jim gave Molly a smack, whereat the girl blushed furiously and the majority of the spectators clapped their hands and cheered. The six defeated candidates were dissatisfied, however, and that they were angry was plain



tie seen. They had held a brief conversation among themselves, and now one stepped forward and slapped Dick on the shoulder.

"See heer," he said, in a hoarse, growling voice, "I don't think ye hev treeted us fa'r in this heer matter."

"Why not?" asked Dick.

"W'y not?"

"Yes."

"W'y, et's simple ernuff. Ye won Molly, heer, an' now ef ye hev gone an' giv' 'er up ter Jim Sheppard."

"Well, that was in accordance with the conditions I imposed when I entered the contest,"

"I don' know whut ye mean."

"Well, you know that I said I would not enter the contest unless I was left to do as I pleased about accepting the girl if I won her."

"Ya-as, I berleeve ye did say thet."

"Of course I did; and I please to give Molly to Jim. He would have won her but for me, and I think it only right to give her to him."

"Waal, all ther same, ther res' uv us boys don' think so."

"Why not?"

"We don' think et is a fa'r deal."

"It is perfectly fair and square in every way."

"We kain't see et thet erway."

"There is no other way to look at the matter," said Dick sternly.

"Uv course ye think so—er ye'd say so, ennyway."

"It is true; and you fellows have no reason to complain."

"I think we hev—an' so do ther res' uv ther boys think so, too."

"I don't see why you should have anything to complain of; you cannot deny that Jim had you all beaten, anyway, and my coming into the contest did not have any effect on your chances, one way or another."

"I know thet, but——"

"But what?"

"Ye won Molly."

"I know that; but I didn't choose to keep her, and so gave her to Jim, who was the next best jumper, and I don't think it is any of your business!"

"Oh, come now, young feller, ye don' want er git sassy!" said the young backwoodsman, threateningly.

"I am not 'sassy,' as you term it; I am simply telling you what is true—making a simple statement of facts."

"Waal, we hev our own idees erbout thet, an' we don' think et wuz er squar' deal."

"See heer, Lem Larkins," said Jim Sheppard, stepping

forward and confronting the fellow, "ef ye want er fuss, say so, an' I'll accommerdate ye enny way ye say. But don' go fur ter pickin' er fuss with this heer young stranger!"

"You're all right, Jim!" said Dick's comrade, patting the young man on the shoulder.

"Uv course ye'd stan' up fur ther feller, Jim Sheppard!" sneered the fellow addressed as Lem Larkins. "I would, too, ef he hed turned Molly over ter me."

"Thet's all right; ef ye want trubble, hev et with me. Don' pick onter ther stranger."

Dick, who was a close observer, could see that Lem was not eager for an encounter with Jim, who was a regular young giant of a fellow. He dodged the issue by saying that he had no quarrel against Jim.

"Et's this heer stranger I'm complainin' uv," he said; "he hain't done ther fa'r thing, an' he hez gotter settle with me fur et!"

"Shame on ye, Lem Larkins!" cried one of the bystanders. "Ye hain't got no right ter interfere in this matter. Ye wuz beat by Jim afore ther young feller cum erlong, so whut bizness is et uv your'n?"

"I don' keer; me an' ther boys, heer, don' like ther way this heer feller hez ackted," said Lem, sullenly; "an' he's gotter settle with us!"

"What kind of settlement do you wish?" asked Dick, calmly.

"W'y we've made up our min's ter this heer: Ye kin pick out wun uv us—we don' keer w'ich wun—ter fight with, and w'ichever wun uv us et is thet ye picks on is goin' ter giv' ye er good lickin' fur our hull crowd."

"Oh, that is the idea, eh?" smiled Dick.

"See heer, Lem Larkins," said Jim Sheppard, "ye hain't ergoin' ter do nothin' uv ther kin'. Ef ye want er fight sumbuddy, let et be me—an' let's you an' me be ther wuns ter fight. Thet will giv' ye er chance ter git even fur whut ye perten' ter think hain't fa'r treetment."

"No," with a shake of the head; "I'm goin' ter hev et out with this heer stranger. He's ther wun we're mad at."

Dick gently pushed Jim back. "It's all right, Jim," he said; "if he must fight, and nothing else will do him, why, I shall be happy to accommodate him—and I think that he will wish that he had been satisfied to let things go as they were, without interfering, by the time I get through with him."

"Say, Dick," said the youth's companion, "there are only six of those fellows; let the two of us give the six a good thrashing!"

All looked at the bold speaker in surprise, but the ma-



jority doubtless thought he was joking. They saw that Dick took the matter seriously, however, for he shook his head and said: "No, there is no need of that, Bob; this fellow has himself said that I could select one of their number and fight him, and that that would settle it— isn't that correct, Mr. Larkins?"

"Yas, thet's kerrect," was the surly reply. Lem was glaring at the youth who had been addressed as Bob, but he might as well have tried to look a wooden man out of countenance, for the youth met his gaze boldly and grinned in the most insolent manner imaginable.

"All right, then," said Dick, briskly; "I will select you for my opponent and we will quickly decide this matter."

But Mr. Hunker interfered at this juncture. "See heer, boys," he said, "this hain't no way ter do. I tell ye et hain't right ter fight, fur thar hain't nothin' ter fight erbout."

"Ye hain't got no say in this heer, Joe Hunker!" snarled Lem Larkins. "Ther bizness is all settled, 'xcep' ther score we hev erg'in this heer young stranger, an' we're goin' ter settle thet mighty quick!"

A number of the people present tried to shame Lem out of the notion of fighting with the stranger, but he was obstinate, and would not give up the idea. The fact was, that he thought he would have an easy time with the stranger, who did not look to be so large as himself, and he was angry and disappointed and wanted to vent his spite and anger on some one.

"I'm ready whenever you are," said Dick, quietly. "Where will we go to have the settlement?"

"Whur'll we go?"

"Yes."

"W'y, no place; right heer is ez good er place ez enny ter hev et out."

"What! Before the women and children?"

"Sart'in; they won't min' et. They've seen fights afore ter-day."

"Yes, ef ye're goin' ter fight ye might ez well do et heer afore us all," said Mr. Hunker; "though I think et is pesky mean uv ye, Lem Larkins, ter push ther matter."

"Don't mind, Mr. Hunker; he'll wish he hadn't pushed the matter before he gets through with it," smiled Dick.

"Bah! ye're braggin' now!" sneered Larkins.

"You are mistaken; I never brag."

"Waal, ye won't hev nothin' ter brag erbout w'en I git through with ye!"

"Who is bragging now?" with a smile.

"I know whut I'm torkin' erbout."

"No, you just think you know. You will know more,

I am sure, by the time we get through with our littetto."

"I hain't erfeerd."

"Oh, I don't suppose you are."

"He hasn't sense enough to know he is in danger, Dick," said Bob, with a smile.

"Don' ye git too smart with yer tork!" said one of the other young men, threateningly.

"Do you want to fight me at the same time they are it?" asked Bob, quickly. He was anxious to get into the affair, somewhere, and welcomed the speech of the fellow. His eagerness to get into a fight was so apparent, however, that the fellow drew in his horns, figuratively speaking, and growled out: "Theer hain't no use uv us fightin'. They're goin' ter fight, an' et hez be'n settled thet th would settle et."

"Oh, all right," with a grin; "just as you say, but I can tell you one thing, and that is, that you don't have to slap me in the face more than half a dozen times in order to get a fight."

Murmurs of approval went up from the spectators. They liked Bob the better for his show of spirit.

The two who were to do battle now doffed their coats and hats and squared off. It was comical to see the position taken by the young backwoodsman. That is to say, he would have been comical to any one who knew anything about such things; Bob was the only one present who did know, and he smiled, but said nothing. As for Dick, he assumed the correct position, with arms held in such fashion that they could be used both for defensive and offensive work. Mr. Hunker had taken it upon himself to act as master of ceremonies, and he waited till the two were in position and then said:

"Go et! An' may ther bes' man win!"

Instantly Lem Larkins rushed toward his antagonist with the ferocity of a mad bull.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A BRIEF AND DECISIVE ENCOUNTER.

It is likely that the majority of those who were watching the affair thought that Dick was going to get the worst of it. He was not so large as Lem, and they judged that on this account he was not so strong—and they thought that brute strength would settle the affair. They erred in this, in both respects, for brute strength would not decide



and even if such were the case, Dick would have been winner even then, for he was stronger than his larger tagonist.

He gave ground before the rush of the other, however, he wished to avoid running the risk of being struck by chance blow. Lem was a lusty fellow, and a blow from his huge fist, if properly landed, might do considerable damage. So Dick gave ground at first, and this, again, made the spectators think he was going to get the worst of it.

They were to be treated to a surprise, however, for when Lem had followed his opponent around in a half circle, and had almost exhausted himself striking the empty air, Dick suddenly struck two blows, one catching Lem on the chin, knocking his head back and bringing its owner to a stop, and then another full in the pit of the stomach, which landed the recipient flat on his back on the ground, with a thud and a grunt of pain.

Then as he began rolling and kicking about, trying to gain his breath, exclamations of wonder and amazement escaped the lips of the spectators.

"Wonderful!"

"Who'd er thort et!"

"I never seen ennythin' like thet afore!"

"I wouldn't er-b'leaved ther young feller c'u'd hit such hard lick!"

"He's knocked all ther breath outer Lem!"

The fallen youth's five comrades stared in wonder and dismay. They looked first at their comrade and then at Dick, and it was evident that they hardly knew what to make of the affair.

Jim Sheppard was delighted. He clapped Dick on the shoulder and said: "Bully fur you, young feller! I'm mighty glad thet ye giv' 'im them licks! Mebby et'll earn 'im sumthin'."

"It may," replied Dick; "I hope so, anyway."

"I don't think he is the kind of fellow who learns very readily," said Bob.

Presently Lem caught his breath, and after a few moments of gaspings and panting he rose to a sitting posture and looked up at the youth who had floored him.

"Whut did ye hit me with?" he asked, feeling of his chin and stomach, gingerly.

"With my fists."

"With yer fists?"

"Yes."

"Nothin' else?"

"Nothing else."

"Didn' ye hev sum rocks in yer hands?"

"No," with a smile. "What made you think that?"

"Whutever et wuz thet hit me wuz ez hard ez er rock."

"Well, they were my fists and nothing else."

The young backwoodsman scrambled slowly and laboriously to his feet. "Lemme see yer han's," he said.

Dick held them out. The other took hold of them and examined them carefully. "Shut 'em up," he said presently.

Dick obeyed, and the other felt of the fists and seemed surprised when he found them to be as solid and hard, almost, as iron.

"Well, what do you think about it now?" asked Dick.

"I guess ye tole ther trooth."

"You don't think I hit you with rocks or anything like that, eh?"

The other shook his head. "No, I guess et wuz jes' yer fists," he admitted.

"You are right; that was what I struck you with. And now if you are ready we will go on with that little affair of ours."

"You mean ther fight?"

"Certainly."

The other shook his head. "Theer won't be no more fightin'," he said.

"There won't?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Becos I've got ernuff."

At this a shout went up from the spectators, with the exception of the five youths who sympathized with Lem, and were his companions in disappointment and misery.

"You don't mean to say you have enough so soon?" exclaimed Dick, in pretended amazement.

The other nodded sheepishly. "Yas, I've got ernuff."

"Well, I must say I'm surprised, Mr. Larkins. I thought you had more stamina than that."

"Oh, ye did?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I guess thet ef I hed belted ye in ther stummick ez hard ez ye hit me ye wouldn't be in er hurry ter resk gittin' another dose uv ther same!"

"Did it hurt?" asked Bob, with a quizzical air.

"Did et hurt?" angrily. "Great Jupiter! d'ye thing et would hurt ye ef er blamed mule wuz ter kick ye in ther stummick?"

"I suppose it would hurt some," replied Bob, with a grin.

"Et would thet; an' et seemed ter me ez ef them licks



this feller giv' me would finish me! I never hed ennythin' hurt me so bad in all my life!"

"And you are entirely satisfied?" asked Dick.

"Yas."

"Don't want any more?"

"Ye bet I don't!"

There was a laugh from the crowd at this. The tone and air he used was enough to make any one laugh.

"Oh, uv course et seems funny ter ther res' uv ye people!" he growled, "but I kin tell ye et wuzn't funny fur me!"

Dick turned his attention to the other five youths. "Are you all satisfied?" he asked quietly. "If not, and there is one among you who wishes to do so, he can step forward and take Mr. Larkins' place."

The young men looked at one another questioningly, while all the spectators looked at them in the same fashion, with eager interest added.

The young men did not seem eager to take the place left vacant by Mr. Larkins, and Bob grinned and said: "Don't be backward, boys. You have been howling for a chance to get even with my friend, here, and now that you have the chance you had better take advantage of it."

But the young men shook their heads. "I am satersfied," said one sullenly.

"An' so'm I!" from another.

The others said the same, and Dick nodded his head. "Very well," he said; "if you are satisfied, that settles it. I would have been satisfied to let the matter go as it was, but Mr. Larkins, here, insisted that you had a grievance against me and I could not do otherwise than give him satisfaction."

"You gave him satisfaction, too, Dick!" said Bob, with a grin.

The young men frowned and glared at Bob, but it had no effect on him; he grinning back at them in the most aggravating manner imaginable.

Then the six turned and walked away, disappearing in the timber. As soon as they were gone, Mr. Hunker came up to the youths and said: "Won't ye two young men come over ter ther house with us an' stay fur ther weddin'?"

Dick and Bob were surprised. "When is the wedding o be held?" asked Dick.

"This evening."

"This evening?"

"Yas; at ha'f-pas' eight o'clock."

The youths looked inquiringly at each other, and then at the sun. "What time is it now, I wonder?" remarked Dick.

"It is about five o'clock, Dick," replied Bob.

"How far is it to your house, Mr. Hunker?"

"On'y erbout ha'f er mile."

"Let's go, Dick," said Bob; "we couldn't go much farther this evening, anyway."

"All right, Bob."

Jim Sheppard came and shook hands with Dick and congratulated him on giving Lem Larkins a thrashing. "You are a mighty good man!" he said admiringly; "I didn't think ye c'u'd do et, but ye did; an' I'm mighty glad uv et!"

"Thank you," said Dick; "he would have it, and so had to give it to him."

"Well, he won't want any more," grinned Bob.

The crowd now scattered, the people dispersing to their homes, and Dick and Bob accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Hunker to their home. The youths were made to feel entirely at home and were soon seated on the porch, talking with their host, while the women of the house were bustling around within, getting ready for the wedding.

"We won't hev much ter eat fur supper," said Mr. Hunker; "we air goin' ter hev er big supper when the ceremony is over, an' then we'll feel like eatin'."

"True," agreed Dick; "I am not very hungry, anyway."

A few minutes later supper was announced, and they went in and ate, after which they again adjourned to the porch, it being more comfortable out of doors than in.

At seven o'clock the guests began arriving, and it was seen that they were, in the main, the people who had been present at the jumping contest. One thing Dick and Bob noticed, however, was that neither of the six defeated contestants were present.

Presently an old ducky, carrying a fiddle, put in appearance, and the youths looked at each other. "Looks as if there was to be some dancing, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes, I guess you are right, Bob."

The next person to arrive was the preacher, a long, lank old man, who spoke in a nasal tone and drawled his words out.

"The parson is here, and that means that there will be a wedding, sure enough," remarked Bob.

"Yes; it's about time Jim was getting here, isn't it? Ah, there he comes!"

Sure enough, there came Jim, and he was dressed up in his Sunday best. To tell the truth, Jim was not badly looking, and he was a stalwart, manly looking fellow. It was certain that Molly had done wisely and well in getting Jim.

The young backwoodsman came up onto the porch and



shook hands with Dick and Bob, and, sitting down, began talking to them. It was evident that he was nervous and ill at ease. He fidgeted about and kept looking in through the open doorway at the crowd in the house.

"Blazes! but I wush't et wuz over with!" he said finally.

"A little bit afraid, are you, Jim?" smiled Dick.

"Ye bet I am! Say, I'd ruther fight thet hull gang thet ye hed ther rumpus with this evenin' than ter hev ter go in theer an' stan' up afore all them peeples an' git married!"

"Oh, well, there's one consolation, you will only have to do it the once, Jim," smiled Dick; "and it will not last long. You can afford to be tortured fifteen minutes in order to be happy all the rest of your life, can't you?"

"Yas; ye bet I wanten git married, all right; but I'm kinder dreading goin' through ther ceremony."

"Oh, well, no one is going to hurt you, Jim," said Bob.

"Thet's so. Oh, I guess I'll git through, all right!"

"I think so," said Dick.

Presently the time was almost at hand for the performing of the ceremony, and Jim went into the house. Dick and Bob followed, and were given the seats where the best view of the affair was to be obtained.

After a wait of perhaps ten minutes Jim and Molly appeared and took up their position. Jim looked pale and trembled perceptibly, and Molly was somewhat pale also, but seemed more calm and self-possessed than Jim.

The minister then arose and took his place in front of the couple. He hemmed and hawed, and took up five minutes at least in putting on his glasses and getting in readiness for the ceremony. During this interval Jim fidgeted and looked as if he would have been glad had the floor opened and let him through.

Then, just as the minister was about to begin the ceremony, there came an interruption. A voice was heard out in the yard, and all understood the words spoken, which were:

"They are in the house, sure, and can't git erway. All we hev ter do is ter surround ther house an' then when they beom eout ye kin grab 'em an' make pris'ners uv 'em! They're rebels, an' I know et!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE DISSATISFIED HALF-DOZEN.

It would have been hard to find a more angry and disgusted lot of young fellows than the six young backwoods-

men who had been defeated in the jumping contest for the hand of Molly Hunker. Naturally, Lem Larkins who, in addition to being defeated in the contest, had been given a thrashing by the young stranger, was the most disgusted one of the lot. He muttered angrily and breathed forth threats as they walked slowly away through the timber.

"Who air them theer young fellers, ennyway?" asked Josh Bunson.

"I dunno," replied Lem; "they air strangers."

"Yer right; they don' berlong in these heer parts."

"No; an' they hain't got no bizness comin' heer an' interfereerin' in our doin's, eether."

"Yer right erbout thet."

"And I'm fur payin' uv 'em out fur et, I am!"

"Me, too!"

"An' me!"

"But they'll go on theer way," said one, "an' we won't never see 'em erg'in."

"Thet's so," said Lem Larkins, stopping abruptly; "but hol' on—mebby they won't go right erway," he continued. "They may stop at ole Hunker's fur ther weddin'."

"Thet's so; et's ter be ter-night."

"Let's go back an' watch," suggested one; "and then ef ther strangers go ter ther house with ther Hunkers, we'll know they air goin' ter stay fur ther weddin'."

"Thet's right; an' thet's er good plan, too," agreed Lem. "Come on back, an' we'll soon know whut they air goin' ter do."

The six turned and stole back to the edge of the timber, and there, hidden behind trees, they watched till they saw Dick and Bob accompany Mr. and Mrs. Hunker away from the spot.

"Thet settles et," said Lem; "they air goin' ter stay at ther Hunker's fur ther weddin', an' will, prob'bly, stay all night; now whut we wanten do is ter think up some skeem fur gittin' even with them fellers."

"Thet's right; I sh'd think we c'u'd do et, all right."

"We kin, I'm shore; but, say, let's go ter ther ole cabin over in ther woods an' stay theer till we make up our min's whut ter do."

This met with the approval of all. "All right," said one; and then the others said the same, after which the party set out.

A walk of ten minutes brought them to an old cabin in the depths of the timber. The young men had evidently been there before, for they entered unhesitatingly and proceeded to make themselves comfortable. And when supper-time came they placed some cold food on a rough table and



ate their fill. As they ate they talked, and discussed the matter of getting revenge on the youth who had given Lem the thrashing.

They had been talking and discussing the matter for nearly two hours, and had been unable so far to think of any plan that seemed to be feasible. At last Lem uttered an exclamation.

"I have it!" he cried. "Why didn't I think of it before?"

"What is it?" asked Josh.

"Tell us!" from the others, in unison.

"Do ye remember that party uv redcoats we ran across, over on the river, yesterday afternoon, boys?"

"Yas; ther fishin' party."

"Theer wuz ha'f er duzzen uv 'em, ye know."

"Yas."

"Waal, whut is ter hender us frum goin' an' gittin' ther redcoats ter he'p us?"

"He'p us ter do whut?"

"W'y, ter break up ther weddin' ceremony an' capter them two strangers."

"Capter 'em?"

"Yas."

"Whut'd ther redcoats wanter capter ther young fellers fur?"

"W'y, don' ye see?" queried Lem.

The others shook their heads. "No, I don' fur wun," replied Josh.

"Then ye're mighty dumb."

"W'y so? Whut'd they capter ther young fellers fur?"

"Fur bein' rebels, to be shore!"

Lem looked around at his companions with an air of importance, while they, on their hand, uttered exclamations.

"Rebels!"

"D'ye think they reely air rebels?"

"Thet's er good skeem, Lem!"

Such were a few of the remarks made. Lem was well pleased by the interest which his statement had caused.

"Whut makes ye think them fellers air rebels, Lem?" asked Josh, after a few moments of silence.

"W'y, et stan's ter reezon thet they air."

"How d'ye make thet out?"

"This way: They're strangers, hain't they?"

"Yas."

"An' they tork an' act like they wuz frum ther North, don' they?"

"Yas, they do, fur er fack."

"Waal, an' now, who air in control uv Savannah?"

"Ther British."

"Uv course they air; now I'll ask ye er question: D'ye think these heer two fellers air redcoats?"

The five shook their heads.

"Ye think not, hey?"

"Oh, they hain't redcoats," said Josh; "et's easy ter thet."

"Exackly," triumphantly; "an' ef they hain't redcoats, whut air they?"

"I guess ye're right erbout ther matter, Lem," said Josh; "I sh'd jedge thet they air rebels."

"Yas, I'll bet they air; an' I'll bet, too, thet they spies."

"Spies?"

"Yas."

"Waal, ef thet's so, ther redcoats would be glad uv th' chance ter capter 'em, wouldn't they?"

"Ye bet they would!"

"Waal, I guess yer skeem is er good wun, Lem. I go right over ter ther redcoats' camp an' see whut th' hev ter say erbout et."

"All right."

The young men left the cabin and walked through timber a distance of about a mile. Then they came to encampment on the bank of the Savannah River. redcoats were in camp, and they were busy cooking th' suppers at a camp-fire.

They greeted the youths pleasantly. Evidently th' had seen each other before. "Glad to see you, boys," said one of the redcoats. "Want to play some more cards, eh?"

"No, not this time," replied Lem.

"No?" the redcoat exclaimed. "I was sure that's what you came for, and was getting ready to spend enjoyable evening."

"No; we hev come on bizness."

"On business, eh?" in a surprised voice.

"Yas."

"What sort of business?"

"I'll tell ye. Would ye fellers like ter capter er cov' uv rebels?"

The redcoats started and looked interested. "Wh' that you say—rebels? Where?"

Then Lem told his story, the soldiers listening with terest, and when the young man had finished they looked at one another in a triumphant manner.

"This is all right, eh, fellows?" remarked one, seemed to be looked upon as the leader.

"Yes," one replied; "those strangers are undoubt' spies, just as Lem, here, thinks."



Yes, they are rebel spies!"

"I haven't a bit of doubt regarding that."

"And, being spies, it follows that they are in all probability very important ones."

"Yes; if we succeed in capturing them we will find that have caught some big fish, I'll warrant you."

"Then ye fellers air goin' ter go inter this thing an' try capter 'em?" asked Lem.

"We certainly are!"

"Good!" the young man exclaimed; "I'm glad uv thet!"

"Yas; now we'll git even with thet feller!" said Josh mson.

"You say there is to be a wedding at the house where ose two strangers are?"

"Yas."

"At what hour is the wedding to be held?"

"At ha'f-pas' eight."

"And it is nearly eight now. Well, we don't care any- ing about the wedding, one way or the other, but we will y and drop around there before long and make prisoners the rebel spies."

"Hedn't ye better go right erway?" asked Lem. "Ther llers might go on their way arter ther weddin' is over."

"I don't think there is any danger of that; but as we can one time as well as another, we will go the moment we t through eating our supper."

"All right."

"We will eat in a hurry, too; sit down, you fellows, and ake yourselves comfortable."

The young men obeyed, and waited with some impatience r the redcoats to get through. Fifteen minutes sufficed, d then the soldiers were ready to start.

The party set out, and there were just a dozen in it— x redcoats and six backwoodsmen.

A walk of fifteen minutes brought them to the home f Molly Hunker, and they paused to investigate. They on learned that the guests were all in the house and that e ceremony was just about to be performed. Then they ole-forward, and Lem, in his excitement and joy at the ough that he was to have revenge on the youth who had iven him the thrashing, yelled out, as we have seen: "They're in the house an' can't git erway! All ye hev er do is ter surround ther house, an' when they come ut ye kin grab 'em an' make pris'ners uv 'em! They're ebels, an' I know et!"

As we know, the words were heard by those within the ouse, and caused consternation among the inmates. The reacher paused and stared around at the people in ques- ioning wonder. Jim, the bridegroom, was the first to

speak, and he said, in a low, but eager and excited voice: "Thet wuz Lem Larkins' voice!"

## CHAPTER V.

### A SHOT FROM AMBUSH.

"Are you sure?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I'm shore uv et; but whut does he mean by torkin' erbout theer bein' rebels in heer?"

"I think he means my comrade and myself," was Dick's reply; "doubtless there are a lot of redcoats out there."

"Yes, I see some men with red uniforms on," said one guest, who stood near the door.

"Will you please close the door and bar it?" asked Dick, quietly.

A couple of the men obeyed, and the action was greeted by yells of rage from without.

"Open that door!" cried a voice. "Open the door, or we will open fire on the house!"

Then followed a loud rapping on the door. Dick stepped to it and said: "Who are you, and what do you want here?"

"I am an officer in the service of the king, and I demand that the door be opened at once!"

"Why have you come here and caused a disturbance? A wedding is in progress in here and you have no right to come and interfere."

"Oh, yes, we have; we have the right and the might, too!"

"You are sure of that, are you?"

"Yes; so you might as well open the door. I judge you are one of the two young strangers, are you not?"

"Yes; but what of that?"

"Well, we want you two, and you two only; so if you will open the door and come forth, no one else shall be molested."

"And if I refuse to open the door?"

"Then we will break it down and will take you two fellows by force; and if some of the other people get hurt it will be your fault and not ours!"

"Oh, that is it, eh? You wish to make the two of us prisoners?"

"We are going to do it!"

"I have a favor to ask of you," said Dick.

"What is it?"

"That you give me a few minutes in which to confer with my comrade regarding this matter."



"All right; I'll do it. Don't think you can escape, however, for the house is surrounded."

Dick made no answer, but hastened back to where Bob was standing. "Wait down here and keep the people from becoming alarmed, Bob," he said; "I will go upstairs and see if I can look out. I want to see how many redcoats there are out there."

"All right, Dick."

Dick hastened upstairs and made the rounds of rooms on the second floor. He managed to size up the situation pretty well, thanks to the moon which was now shining quite brightly, and he hastened back downstairs.

"There are not more than half a dozen of the redcoats, Bob," he said in answer to the youth's look of inquiry.

"And are there others besides the redcoats?"

"Yes, about half a dozen."

"Probably it is that gang that was at the jumping contest."

"Likely; you know Jim says the voice we heard out there at first was that of Lem Larkins."

"So he did; well, what shall we do, Dick? We are not going to surrender to any such crowd as that."

"No; I'll tell you what we will do: We will send the people all upstairs and you and I will give battle to that crowd out there."

"All right; that suits me."

Dick told the folks what decision he had come to, and the people hastened to go upstairs—all excepting Jim and two other men.

"We'll stay down heer with ye an' he'p fight ther scoun'rels," said Jim.

"No, no; you mustn't do that, Jim," protested Dick; "remember, it is your wedding night, and what if you were to be killed or seriously wounded? Think of Molly. No; you go upstairs, and Bob and I and these two men will be enough for those fellows out there, or I miss my guess."

But Jim refused to go upstairs. "Et's partly on my 'count thet ye hev got inter trubble," said he, "an' I'm goin' ter he'p ye. I don't like Lem Larkins an' ther res' uv his crowd, nur do I like ther redcoats; an' I'll fight with ye till ther last gasp!"

"All right, Jim, since you really wish it that way. You are a brave fellow, and I hope that no harm will come to you."

"Oh, I don't think theer is much danger; we hev ther purteckshun uv ther walls uv ther house, ye know."

"Hello, in there!" came in the voice of the redcoat, from without. "The time is up. What have you decided to do?"

"We have decided to defy you!" was the clear, ringing reply. "We are not going to surrender!"

"What's that—not going to surrender?"

"No."

"You had better think well before coming to that decision!"

"We have done so."

"And still you are not going to surrender?"

"We are not."

"Then we will open fire on the building!"

"While we will open fire on you!"

"What! Will you dare offer to resist?"

"We will do more than that; we will whip you and se you away from here wiser than when you came!"

"Bah! there are only two of you; what can you do against a dozen of us?"

"Pitch in and find out!"

"You are mad to think of resisting."

"On the contrary, you will find that we are wise doing so. I assure you that we are amply able to do so and there are more than two of us, too, if that will of interest to you."

"More than two of you?"

"Yes."

"Who are the others?"

"That is for you to discover."

"Well, we'll do it, fast enough. For the last time, will you surrender?"

"And for the last time—no!"

"You will regret your decision."

"I don't think so."

"You will see; now look out for yourselves!"

"And you and the rest of your gang look out for yourselves!"

"Bah!" Then the men heard the sound of retreating footsteps.

"D'ye think they'll fire on ther house?" asked Jim.

"Yes," replied Dick; "and I'll tell you what I intend doing: They will fire a volley, and the instant they have done so I will open the door and we will dash out upon them. Be ready!"

"All right!" said Jim, grimly.

He had a rifle, the property of Mr. Hunker, while the other two men had pistols, also Mr. Hunker's. Dick softly unbarred the door so as to be ready to jerk it open at the proper moment, and then they waited. They were careful to keep back, out of range, from the door, as they doubted not this would be the point aimed at.

They were right; for suddenly the crash of a vol-



heard, and several bullets came in through the door whistled across the room.

Instantly Dick jerked the door open, at the same instant calling out: "Now!" and he and Bob, followed by the other two men, leaped out and dashed toward a group of redcoats and backwoods youths.

The members of the attacking party were taken by surprise, and stood staring at the five in stupefied amazement. They were to be rudely aroused, however. "Fire!" suddenly cried Dick, and the five fired a volley.

Two of the redcoats fell, either dead or wounded, and the young men took to their heels and left the redcoats to let it out. They attempted to draw their pistols, but before they could do so the five were upon them. The redcoats struggled fiercely, and seeing that they were outnumbered, and would be overpowered soon, they broke and fled at the top of their speed.

Jim, whose fighting blood was up, wanted to pursue them, but Dick told him that it would be best to let them go. "We have killed two of their number," he said, "and I guess that will be sufficient to put a damper on any further attempts on the part of the others."

"I reckon ye're right erbout thet; but I tell ye, my good is up, an' I'd giv' er purty penny ter git my han's er thet thar Lem Larkins fur erbout er minnet!"

"You think he is to blame for this business, then?"

"Yas; he went an' tole ther redcoats, an' they come along with Lem an' ther other boys."

"I wonder what made the redcoats think we are patriots?"

"Likely Lem tole 'em so."

"I judge you are right; well, let's see if these two are dead."

Dick made an examination and found that the two redcoats were dead. He told Jim to go into the house and tell the guests that the danger was over, and then he told Hunker to bring a spade. The man did so and the bodies of the British soldiers were carried across the road and a grave was soon ready. The bodies were interred and covered up and then the men went to the house.

The people were downstairs again, and were talking excitedly of the affair. It was nearly half an hour before things could get quieted down sufficiently so that the ceremony could be gone on with. Then Jim and Molly took up their position and the minister said the words which made the twain one.

Then everybody in the house shook hands with the happy couple and congratulated them, after which the entire company adjourned to the large and roomy kitchen and

dining-room combined and sat up to a long table which was fairly groaning with good things to eat.

The guests seemed to forget that there had been any unpleasant happening, and enjoyed themselves to the full. They ate heartily, and laughed and talked in a lively fashion. Dick and Bob were the guests of honor, and had the seats next to the young married couple.

Jim and Molly, now that the ordeal was over, seemed happy as larks, and they were the jolliest couple present. When supper was over the chairs were cleared out of the big sitting room, with the exception of some that were ranged along the walls, and then the negro got his fiddle out, tuned it up, and the dancing began.

This was kept up till two o'clock in the morning, though the majority of the older people went home at midnight, just the young couples remaining. A jolly time was had, and Dick and Bob were the lions of the occasion. They danced with every girl present, from two to three times, and when they finally went to bed, about half-past two, they were almost tired out.

They went to sleep instantly, but were up bright and early next morning, and, after breakfast, bade good-by to their newly made friends, and mounting their horses, rode onward in a southerly direction.

They were in no particular hurry, so rode slowly and conversed. "Well, Dick, we have had quite a lively time since yesterday evening," said Bob Estabrook—for the two were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, the young "Liberty Boys" who had made themselves so famous, as the reader has long since guessed.

"Yes, indeed, Bob," was the reply; "that was rather an unique experience, the competing in the jumping contest for the hand of Molly Hunker."

"That's right; and, say, those six fellows were mad at you for not taking the prize after winning it, weren't they?"

"Yes, they were quite angry."

"And Lem Larkins wasn't satisfied till he had got a thrashing—ha! ha! ha!"

"No; and I don't think he is satisfied even now, Bob."

"Well, I guess you are right about that."

"I am sure of it; he will do me injury, if he possibly can do so."

"But he won't have much chance, Dick; as we don't expect to stay in this vicinity very long."

"No; and I am not afraid of anything he may do, anyway. He is a coward at heart."

"Yes; but those are the kind of fellows who do the most



damage, sometimes. They don't give you warning, you know, but take you unawares."

"True; but I shall not worry about him."

At this instant, crack! went a rifle, and Dick's hat was knocked off his head by a bullet!

## CHAPTER VI.

### A FRIGHTENED YOUTH.

Quick as a flash the youths were off their horses and running toward the timber, from which direction the shot had sounded.

"He's right here in the edge of the timber, Dick!" cried Bob, with grim expression. "I pity the fellow if we get sight of him!"

The youths had drawn their pistols and were ready to fire the instant there was anything to shoot at. As they ran they leaped this way and that, going in a zig-zag manner so as to make it difficult for any one to hit them.

Just before they reached the edge of the timber there came another sharp, whip-like crack, and a bullet whistled past Dick's ear. Whoever the unseen marksman was, he seemed to be determined to bring down Dick.

The next moment the two were within the shelter of the timber, however, and they caught sight of a form flitting away, among the trees.

"Stop!" cried Dick. "We see you, and will put a couple of bullets into you if you don't halt!"

The fellow did not obey; instead, he seemed to run the faster.

"Let's give him a couple of shots for luck, Dick!" said Bob.

"All right; I'm rather curious to see who the fellow is, and he doesn't seem inclined to stop and wait for us to come up with him."

The youths lifted their pistols and fired. They did not stop to take aim, but made what are known as snap-shots; they were successful, however, for a wild yell went up from the fugitive, and he fell to the ground and began yelling, "I'm killed! I'm killed!" at the top of his voice.

"We will soon know what sort of looking fellow he is, now," said Dick.

"You are right; and, somehow, I think we will recognize the fellow. His voice sounds familiar to me."

They were soon beside the groaning, tumbling, would-be

assassin, and the instant their eyes rested on the fellow's face, exclamations escaped them.

"Lem Larkins!" This in unison.

The youths stared at the fellow on the ground and at each other. "I told you I thought we would recognize him," said Bob.

"So you did, Bob." Then Dick knelt beside the wounded youth and asked: "Where is your wound?"

"Ther' bullet hit me in ther thigh, an' I think killed!" was the groaning reply.

"I'll make an examination," said Dick; "and will tell you whether or not you are dangerously wounded."

Dick made the examination, and then rose to his feet and said, with a laugh: "Get up, Larkins; you are hurt scarcely at all!"

"Whut!" the fellow exclaimed, a look of relief coming over his face. "Air ye shore?"

"Absolutely certain of it."

"But I felt a turrible pain in my thigh, an' my suddenly giv' way underneeth me. Et mus' be broken hain't et?"

"No; you have only a slight flesh wound, Larkins, I can't understand how it was that your leg gave underneath you."

"I think I can explain it, Dick," said Bob, with a grin. "He was so badly scared that his nerves were at a great tension and when the bullet struck him it shocked his nervous system and he imagined that he was killed, when in fact, he was only slightly wounded."

"I judge that you are right, Bob." Then to Lem: "Get up; you will find that you can stand and walk now. You are not hurt to speak of."

Larkins struggled slowly to his feet and bore some of his weight on the wounded leg in rather a gingerly way. He found that he could sustain his weight easily, and presently put all his weight on the leg. It seemed to him as strong as it had ever been.

"You see, you are not hurt to speak of," said Dick.

"Et does seem ez ef I am all right," the fellow admitted.

"And now," said Dick, sternly, "you will have to explain why you tried to murder me!"

Larkins started and turned pale. He realized, now, that he had not got entirely out of his troubles. He looked at Dick in a frightened manner.

"I—I—whut d'ye mean, ennyway?" he stammered.

"Just what I say."

"Oh, you know what he means, all right!" said Bob.

"N-no, I d-don't! I—I——"

"Don't try to think up any lies to tell," said Dick.



ly but sternly; "you could not think up one that could be at all reasonable. I know that you fired upon me from the roadside, and came within an ace of killing me. Why did you do it?"

"I—I—d-didn' do et; et mus' hev be'n er redecoat ez me et."

"I told you not to lie about it," said Dick; "tell the truth, and it will be much the better plan."

"Yes, tell the truth, Larkins," said Bob. "You can't deceive us, for we know you fired both those shots."

"Yes; and, now, I wish to know why you did it," said Dick.

Larkins was pale. He looked at the youths for a few moments, hesitated, and then finally said: "I'll tell ye 'y I done et. I wanted revenge on ye!"

"Revenge?"

"Yas; fur ther lambastin' ye giv' me yisterday arternoon."

"So I supposed," said Dick; "and I suppose you were responsible for the appearance of the redcoats at the home of Mr. Hunker, last night, too, were you not?"

Larkins hesitated, but Bob spoke up: "You might as well own up, Larkins," he said; "we recognized your voice, and know you were there, and we saw you running away as we came rushing out of the house."

"Yes, you might as well make a clean breast of it, Larkins," said Dick.

"Waal," doggedly, "I wuz theer, ez ye say."

"And you were instrumental in causing the redcoats to come, were you not?"

"Waal, I s'pose I hed ez much ter do with et ez enny v ther boys. Theer wuz six uv us, ye know."

"Yes, I know; but I judge that you were the one who had the most to do with the matter; you were the one who had most cause to desire to do me an injury, since I had, as you said a while ago, given you a thrashing."

"Waal, I hed ez much ter do with ther matter, but not nny more."

"Well, we have a strong case against you, Larkins," said Dick sternly; "and the question is, what shall we do with you?"

"I think that we ought to hang him, Dick!" said Bob eagerly.

"Well, I think so myself."

"H-hang me!" gasped Larkins.

"Yes."

"Y-you w-wouldn' d-dar' do t-thet!"

Bob laughed aloud, his laughter seeming to strike terror to the soul of Larkins. "You think we wouldn't dare

hang you?" the youth remarked sarcastically. "Why wouldn't we? What would there be to hinder us from doing so? Who would hurt us if we did it?"

"I—I—hev f-friends w-who'd take revenge onter ye ef ye wuz ter hang m-me."

"You have friends?" remarked Bob. "I would hardly have thought it. Would you, Dick?"

"Hardly. Well, it doesn't matter; we are not afraid of his friends."

"Not a bit of it. Then we'll hang him, Dick?" Bob said this briskly. He did not believe that Dick would injure the fellow, and he was determined to give him as much of a scare as he could.

Dick understood Bob's object, and as he did not wish to do the young backwoodsman injury, he fell in with Bob's plan and helped give the fellow a scare.

"I hardly know whether we ought to hang him or not, Bob," was the reply, with a meditative air; "I don't know if his crime deserves such a death. I rather think that we ought to shoot him and let him die in a more respectable manner than at the end of a rope."

Bob pretended to ponder the matter gravely. "Well, perhaps you are right," he said slowly; "still, a would-be assassin is not entitled to much consideration, to my way of thinking."

"I know, Bob; but I never like to hang a man unless I am anxious to punish him to the fullest extent."

"Well, I think this fellow needs to be punished to the fullest extent."

"I will admit that he has committed a bad crime, but he had some excuse for wishing to get revenge on me; I had given him a thrashing, you know."

"Yes, I know; but he deserved the thrashing, if ever a fellow did."

"I admit that; but I think that, on the whole, we ought to let him die an honorable death."

"I—I—d-don' wanter d-die ertall!" stammered Larkins.

"Oh, of course not," said Bob airily; "I have always noticed that the fellows who are so ready to try to shoot other people down are not eager to be treated that way themselves."

"I think we had better just shoot him and let it go at that, Bob," said Dick.

"Oh, all right; if you wish it that way, old man. It was you that he tried to kill, and you have a right to say how he shall die. We'll shoot him, then."

"Yes, I think that will be best."

"How will we do it—the usual way?"

"I guess so."



"All right; we will place a loaded and an unloaded pistol in a coat, folded up lie a sack, and will roll the pistols over and over so that neither of us will know who has the loaded weapon, and then we will never know which of us killed you, Larkins."

Bob said this in such a matter-of-fact way that it made the young backwoodsman shiver. He thought the youth meant it, sure, and he was convinced that he was standing at death's door. He looked around, as if contemplating trying to make his escape, but the youths noticed it and Dick said sternly: "Don't try it, Larkins! You could not get away if you tried. We would shoot you dead before you went six paces."

"Oh, say, p-please d-don' s-shoot me, b-boys!" pleaded Larkins. He was pale with fright, and was trembling at a great rate. He was certainly being punished for his attempt to assassinate Dick.

"I don't see any reason why you should be spared," said Bob.

"Nor do I!" from Dick.

"Say, I'll promise ter be good all ther res' uv my life ef ye won' kill me!" said Larkins.

"Humph! I suppose you would keep your promise about as long as it takes you to make it!" said Dick.

"No, I mean ev'ry word uv et!" eagerly. "I won' never do ennythin' mean erg'in, ef ye'll let me go this time."

"What do you think about it, Bob?" asked Dick.

"I don't know, old man; you are the one to say. He hasn't tried to harm me. If he had tried to kill me as he has you, I think I should have had him laid out stiff as a poker by this time; but you always were a tender-hearted chap."

"What are you, Larkins—Whig or Tory?" asked Dick, abruptly.

Larkins fidgeted and looked worried. "Waal," he said presently, "I kain't say ez how't I'm eether wun."

"But you lean toward the Tories, eh?"

"Waal, I expeck I hev kinder done thet erway, fur er fack."

"I thought so; and now, I'll tell you what I'll do, Larkins: If you will become a patriot, and swear to be true to the cause, I will agree to let you go free."

"He must agree not to try to take your life at any time in the future, too, Dick," said Bob quickly.

"Yes, that is a part of the conditions; what do you say, Larkins?"

"Thet I promise!" was the prompt reply. "And I'll keep my promise, too, and will be a true patriot. To prove

it, I will tell you something, give you some informat " which will be uv value ter ye, I think."

"Go ahead and give us the information," said Dick.

"All right. Ther redcoats air goin' ter come down an' burn ther homes uv ther patriots in this part uv the country."

"They are?"

"Yes."

"When will they come, do you think?"

"Ter-night, I guess."

"To-night, eh?"

"Yas; ye know ye killed two uv ther redcoats las' ni an' thet made ther res 'mighty mad an' they swore they would git even with ye an' all ther patriots in these paoos an' this mornin' they started back ter Savannah, but they'd be back right erway with er ban' uv men thet w burn ther houses uv ther patriots an' kill all thet dared try ter keep 'em frum et."

"Oh, ho! So that is their game, is it?"

"Yas."

"And you think they will get back here to-night?"

"I think so."

"Did you hear them say anything to that effect?"

"I heerd 'em say they thort ter-night would be er g time ter do ther work."

"Exactly; well, we are much obliged for the information, Lem."

"Yer welcum."

"Your giving us the information proves that you are sincere when you said you would be a patriot."

"Oh, ye kin bet I won' be ennythin' else frum now on."

"All right; stick to that, Lem."

"I will."

"All right; you may go, now."

Larkins lost no time in hastening away, the youths watching him out of sight. "What do you think about Bob?" asked Dick. "Do you think he will remain true to the cause of Liberty?"

"Yes, Dick; that is to say, he will remain true to it as long as the redcoats get hold of him."

"You think he is a weather-vane sort of chap, eh?"

"That's it, exactly. He will be anything to anybody to save his life."

"I guess you are right."

"I'm sure I am; but it doesn't matter. He is such a coward he will not be able to do the cause much damage."

"I think not; and now, Bob, what shall we do?"

"Whatever you say, Dick."



"We must see to it that those redcoats do not succeed in putting their plan into successful operation."

"So we must."

"Well, then, our course is obvious. We must send for the 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Yes; with the boys here we will be able to make those redcoats wish they had stayed in Savannah and attended to their own business."

"That's right; and you must ride back to the encampment and bring them as quickly as possible, Bob."

"All right. And you?"

"I will return to Mr. Hunker's and wait for you there."

"All right; we will be there by three o'clock this afternoon."

"Good! And that will be in time, I am sure."

The youths hastened back to the road and found their horses standing where they had been left. The two mounted the animals and rode back to the home of Mr. Hunker.

Naturally, their reappearance caused some excitement, and the folks wanted to know why they had returned so soon. Dick told them, and when they heard that the patriot families of the neighborhood were in danger they became excited and alarmed.

"Thet is bad news!" said Mr. Hunker. "Thet'll be terrible, ef they do thet, won't et?"

"But we are not going to permit it," said Dick; "that is the reason we came back."

"How air ye goin' ter he'p yerselves?"

"I'll tell you," said Dick; and then he told them that he had a force, consisting of one hundred youths like himself, encamped fifteen miles away. "My comrade, Bob, is going after them," he said, "and they will be here by the middle of the afternoon, and when the redcoats come we will make it hot for them."

"Thet will be fine!" said Jim Sheppard. "But who air these young fellers thet ye speak uv?"

Dick glanced around over the faces of those present, and then said: "I believe all here are true-hearted patriots, are they not?"

"Yas, ev'ry wun uv 'em," replied Mr. Hunker; "and thet's whut is worritin' me. We'll be shore ter git er vissit frum them theer redcoats."

"All right; let them come," said Dick. "We'll make them wish they had stayed at Savannah. And, now, I will tell you who those young men are. Have you ever heard of a company of young men known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

Exclamations escaped the lips of all, and Jim exclaimed: "I sh'd reckon we hev'!"

"Yas, we've heerd tell uv theer doin's fur ther pas' twer three years," said Mr. Hunker; "ef we on'y hed theer fellers heer, now, theer redcoats'd think they hed run inter er hornet's nest w'en they come up heer!"

"Then they will think so, Mr. Hunker," said Dick, with a smile; "for the youths in question—the ones my comrade, here, is going after, and who will be here by the middle of the afternoon—are 'The Liberty Boys of '76'!"

"Great spoons!" gasped Mr. Hunker. "An' you—whair you?"

"I am Dick Slater, the captain of the company of 'Liberty Boys,'" was the quiet reply.

"Whoop!" shouted Jim Sheppard, and he leaped forward, and seizing Dick's hand shook it vigorously.

## CHAPTER VII.

### READY FOR THE REDCOATS.

"I'm not ershamed uv bein' beat a-jumpin' by ye, now!" he cried, his face shining with delight and satisfaction. "Ter be beat by Dick Slater hain't no disgrace! Say, but I'm glad ter know ye, Dick—I am, fur er fack! never 'xpeckted ter git ter see ye let erlone shake han' with ye, an' be beat er-jumpin' by ye!"

Dick laughed and shook the youth's hand warmly. "I'm just as glad to know you as you are to know me, Jim," he said earnestly.

Jim shook his head, but there was a pleased look on his face, nevertheless. "Ye're jes' jokin'," he said.

"No, I mean just what I say. You are a patriot, and a brave and honest man. I am always just as glad to make the acquaintance of such men as they possibly can be to make mine."

"Mr. and Mrs. Hunker and Jim's wife had to shake hands with Dick, now, and then he introduced them all to Bob, giving his comrade's real name. "He is my right hand man," said Dick; "we are like brothers, and are usually together."

All shook hands with Bob, and then he leaped into the saddle, and with the remark, "I'm off for the encampment now, Dick," he rode away at a gallop.

"Ye say he will be back with ther rest uv ther men by ther middle uv ther arternoon?" asked Mr. Hunker as they watched Bob out of sight.

"Yes."

"But s'posin' ther redcoats cum sooner than thet?"



Dick looked sober. "How far is it to Savannah?" he asked.

"Ten miles."

"It is possible that they may get here sooner," he said, "but I hope they won't."

"W'y not git up er ban' uv young fellers an' be ready fur 'em ef they do git heer sooner?" asked Jim.

"That is a good idea, Jim," said Dick; "how many young men could you get together by noon, do you think?"

Jim studied a few moments, and then said: "I think I c'u'd git up twenty young fellers by noon."

"And have them here?"

"Yas."

"All right; do so, then. That will enable us to show fight if the redcoats put in an appearance, and we will, perhaps, be able to stand them off till my men get here."

"All right; I'll go an' git er hoss an' start right out."

"Take my horse, Jim; he is fresh, and it will save time."

Jim mounted Dick's horse and rode away at a gallop. Dick took a seat on the porch with Mr. Hunker, and they talked to pass the time away.

A couple of hours passed, and then the young men began putting in an appearance, singly and in pairs. They were hardy, fine-looking young fellows, and were well armed, each and every one having a rifle and pistol.

"I believe they are all right," thought Dick; "if we can get twenty of them together we will be able to worry the redcoats and hold them in check till my 'Liberty Boys' get here."

By eleven o'clock Jim was back, and he said he had the promise from twenty-two young fellows that they would show up by noon or near that time.

"You have done well, Jim," said Dick. "We will be able to make things interesting for the redcoats if they put in an appearance this afternoon."

Mrs. Hunker and Molly had been hard at work for a couple of hours, and had cooked enough for all hands; and when all had eaten they began making preparations for welcoming the enemy. Dick was unanimously voted to the command of the party, and Jim, speaking for all, said they would obey his every order, no matter what it was.

"Ef ye tell us ter charge straight at er regiment uv sojers, we'll do et!" he declared.

"I wish to ask you something, Jim," said Dick. "Where would the redecoats likely to strike, first? What patriot lives in the neighborhood, but nearest to Savannah?"

"Joe's folks live the furthest down thet way," said Jim, nodding toward one of the youths.

"Then we will go down there and keep watch for enemy. How far is it from here?"

"Three miles."

"All right; get ready, everybody, and we will start once. It would be bad if the redcoats should get the house and set fire to the house and do a lot of damage before we reached the spot."

They set out at once, Dick having left instructions Mr. Hunker to tell Bob to come down to where they were as soon as the "Liberty Boys" arrived.

When the party reached the Miller home they were relieved to find that the redcoats had not yet put in appearance.

"This is good luck," said Dick; "now we can lay plans for welcoming the enemy."

He rode down the road a ways and took a survey of the situation. He soon found a spot that would answer admirably for a place to lie in ambush and await the coming of the enemy. Having chosen the spot, he rode to the top of a hill half a mile farther on, and looked toward the south.

"If they are coming, I may be able to get sight of them," he said to himself. He looked, and at first did not see any signs of the redcoats, but after a few minutes he suddenly gave utterance to an exclamation.

"Ah, there they are! And much closer than I expected to see them. They were down in that hollow, and the trees hid them from view. Well, I must hasten back and get the boys placed."

He turned and rode back at a gallop. "They are coming!" he cried, when he was close to the party of youths. "Come this way, quickly. We will have to hurry!"

The youths hastened forward and accompanied Dick to the spot he had selected, and here they took up their positions, being sheltered behind bushes and trees.

"How menny uv 'em air theer, Dick?" asked Jim.

"I think there must be about fifty, Jim," was the reply.

"Thet's er good menny, but I guess we kin hol' 'em all right."

"Of course we can; we could do it if there was twinty-five of them."

"Thet's right!"

"Now, I wish to tell you boys something," said Dick impressively; "I want you to wait till I give you the signal before you take aim, and I want you to aim just as you would if you were going to shoot a squirrel or a wild turkey. You can bring down a man just as easy as you can a squirrel or turkey, if you take aim; but if you shoot at random you won't do much damage. Do you understand?"



"Yas, we unnerstan'," replied Jim; "an' we'll take our aim, ye bet!"

"All right; and don't fire till I give the word. Then let 'em have it; and I'll warrant you that they will think a underbolt has struck them."

"We'll do et—hey, boys?" from Jim.

"Ye bet we will!" was the reply, in chorus.

"All right," said Dick; "I shall depend on you to do st as I have said."

They became silent now and watched for the coming of the redcoats. They waited patiently and watched eagerly for five, ten, fifteen minutes, and the redcoats did not come over the hill, which was distant a quarter of a mile. Dick became suspicious. "I don't like the looks of this," said.

"W'y not?" asked Jim.

"Well, the redcoats ought to have been here ten minutes of time, and they haven't shown up at the top of the hill yet. They looks to me as if they had become suspicious and stopped."

"Et does look thet way, shore; but I don' see how they could hev got suspishus—'nless they saw you erwhile ergo."

"I've been thinking of that, and it is possible they may have seen me, though I didn't think they had done so."

"Waal, whut air ye goin' ter do?"

Dick pondered a few moments. "There is only one thing to do," he said, "and that is to investigate and try to discover why the redcoats have not put in an appearance."

Dick stole away in the direction of the hill, keeping well within the edge of the timber so as to avoid being seen in case the enemy should suddenly appear at the top of the hill.

Dick kept on and finally reached the top of the hill. ere he saw a sight that surprised him not a little. Fifty yards distant, standing in a group, were the redcoats, they having dismounted. It was not the sight of the redcoats that surprised Dick, but of an individual in citizen's clothes who stood among them. Dick recognized the fellow, and this was what surprised him—for the fellow was none other than Lem Larkins, who, only that very morning, had sworn that he would be a true patriot from that time

tions that he would henceforth be a patriot; but every step he took away from Dick and Bob lessened the feeling and caused a new feeling of anger at Dick to take possession of him. The farther he went and the safer he felt, the greater grew the feeling of rage, and the weaker grew his determination to be a patriot. He looked back; he could not see the youths. His anger then became very great, and his determination to be a patriot was thrown to the winds.

"I'm er loyal king's man!" he muttered fiercely. "An' I hate thet thar feller named Dick, wusser'n pizen! I'll do 'im harm ef I kin, an' ye kin jes 'bet on et! I wonder whur they air goin', ennyhow?"

Lem halted and stood looking irresolutely back in the direction from which he had just come. After standing thus a few moments, he heard the sound of hoofbeats. He listened and a surprised look came over his face.

"They're goin' back!" he exclaimed. "I wonder whut thet means? I'll see; I may be mistook, arter all."

He ran back to the road and looked up it. "Yas, they air goin' back in the direckshun they come frum," he muttered. "Now, I wonder why they done thet?"

He pondered a few moments and then set out after the two, but keeping within the edge of the timber so as to avoid any chance of being seen by the youths. "They'd fix me up ef they saw me!" he said to himself. "I ruther think them fellers air bad wuns w'en they git agoin'."

Lem followed the two horsemen, and finally saw them stop at the home of Mr. Hunker. "Now, I wonder w'y they cum back ter Hunker's?" he asked himself. "I kain't unnerstan' et."

He remained in hiding and watched proceedings with considerable interest. He saw Mr. and Mrs. Hunker and Jim and Molly shake hands with Dick, and then with Bob, and he was puzzled by it all. "Thet beats me," he said to himself; "they knowed each other afore. "Now, w'y would they be shakin' han's ez ef they hed jes' got erquainted?"

It was too deep a puzzle for Lem to unravel, and when he saw Bob ride away toward the north he was even more surprised and puzzled. Then, presently he saw Jim mount Dick's horse and ride away, while Dick took up a position on the porch and began talking to Mr. Hunker, and the watcher was now hopelessly muddled:

"I dunno whut et means," he said to himself; "I giv' et up! Et's too much uv er puzzle fur me!"

He remained where he was, however, having nothing else to do, and being curious, anyway, and hoping that something might turn up to give him an inkling of what was in the wind. He was finally rewarded for his patience, for he saw a couple of young fellows put in an ap-

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A YOUNG KNAVE.

While the fear that he might lose his life was upon him, Lem Larkins had believed himself sincere in his protesta-



pearance. Lem knew who the two were, they being, in fact, neighbor boys, and when he saw they carried rifles, a glimmering of the truth came to him.

"Oh, ho! I think I begin ter unnerstan' whut is up, now!" he said to himself. "I tole them two fellers thet ther redcoats wuz goin' ter cum up heer an' burn ther homes uv sum uv ther patriots, an' they air goin' ter git up er ban' an' try ter fight ther British sojers off! Blazes! I wush't I hedn't tole 'em now! But, arter all, I don't think et'll ermount ter much. They kain't git more'n er duzzen er so uv fellers, an' they won't stan' no chance erg'inst ther trained British sojers."

Lem was deeply interested now, and he remained in his place of concealment and watched eagerly. As the young backwoodsmen put in an appearance he kept count, and when all had arrived, and he found that he had counted twenty-two of them, he looked sober.

"Thet's er good mennny, arter all," he thought. "Blazes! whut ef they sh'd lick ther British, arter all? I wunder how mennny theer'll be uv ther British, ennyhow? But shorely they'll bring more'n twenty men. Yas, I know they will; they'll bring enuff ter lick ther boys in thet gang, an' do et eazy."

Lem talked thus, in order to bolster up his courage. He was not at all sure of what he said, but he hoped it would be that way. True, he knew the majority of the young men—had known them all his life—and had played with them, swam with them, hunted with them, but they were "rebels," while he was a loyalist, and he felt that he would not care if they were all killed.

Lem was so interested that he would not leave to go home and get something to eat. He wanted to see what the party of young men would do. He remained where he was till he saw the party set out, going in a southerly direction, and he followed, keeping well within the edge of the timber. He followed till they came to a stop a quarter of a mile from the hill, and then he saw Dick ride forward alone. "He's gone to look for the British," thought Lem.

The Tory youth hardly knew what to do. He debated the matter and could decide on nothing, until finally he saw Dick coming back.

"He's in er hurry!" muttered Lem. "I wunder ef he hez seen ther British?"

Lem would have liked it, had he been where he could hear what Dick said to the boys when he got back to where they were, but he was afraid to venture near enough for this. He watched closely, however, and presently he saw

the youths concealing themselves behind the bushes and trees by the roadside.

"They air goin' ter lay in wait fur ther British!" said to himself, "an' when they come erlong, ther blam rascals will shoot the king's sojers down in cold blood!"

This thought almost paralyzed Lem; and he was at loss to know what to do. At last he thought of the very thing that should have occurred to him at first, viz.: That he should hasten forward and warn the British.

"I'll do et!" he muttered. "W'y didn' I think uv th afore? Blazes! I hope I won't be too late!"

He set out, going as rapidly as he dared, as he was afraid he might be seen or heard by some of the youths all of whom possessed good hearing and eyesight. When he was at a safe distance, however, he broke into a run and ran as fast as he could. It was hard work as it was uphill, but he reached the top, finally, and saw the British coming, but nearly a hundred yards down upon the other side. "I'm jes' in time!" he said to himself, and then he ran down toward the approaching redcoats as fast as he could go. When he was within twenty yards of them he called out, in eager and excited, but cautious tones:

"Stop! Don't come up this way enny furdur! These sum rebels layin' in ambush fur ye, over on ther other side uv ther hill! Stop!"

Of course, the redcoats stopped instantly. They did not wish to run into an ambush and be shot to pieces. They waited till Lem was up to them, and then the leader of the party, who was evidently a captain, asked:

"What do you mean? You say there is a party of rebels ambushed over the hill, waiting for us?"

"Yas, thet's jes' whut I do mean ter say."

"But I didn't know there were any rebels in this part of the country excepting the farmers around here, and they may be in favor of going against the king."

"Waal, these heer air farmers' boys—fellers like me."

"Oh, they are?"

"Yas; but theer's er lot uv 'em?"

"How many?"

"Theer's twenty-three uv 'em."

The face of the captain brightened at this. "Oh, twenty-three of them?" he said, with a laugh. "Good! we'll make short work of the country gawks!"

"Ye hed better be keerful," warned Lem; "they may be country gawks—an' they're rebels, an' I don't like 'em, but they kin shoot."

"Oh, I don't doubt that, but we have more than double their number of men, and what chance will they stand against us? We are trained soldiers, while they have not."



in a fight. They will run like sheep at the first fire on us."

"Mebby so," said Lem, doubtfully. Then a thought struck him, and he added: "Theer's er feller with ther ez knows sumthin' erbout fightin', I think, an' he may be able ter git ther boys ter do sum good fightin'."

"Don't you know who the fellow is?" the captain asked. "He's er stranger; jes' cum ter these parts yisterday, he sed his name wuz Dick Dornley."

"Humph! Dick Dornley, eh?"

"Yas."

"Never heard of him; still, that might be a fictitious one. Was he alone when he came?"

"No; theer wuz another feller with 'im."

"Another fellow, eh?"

"Yas."

"Where is he, now?"

Lem shook his head. "I dunno," he replied; "he rode away, headed toward ther north, this forenoon."

"Ah, he did?"

"Yas."

"And you don't know where he was headed for?"

"Nope."

The captain was silent for a few moments, turning the matter over in his mind. Then he said: "You know where the party is secreted?"

Lem nodded. "Yas, I know."

"Could you lead us to the place by a roundabout route, so as to enable us to take them unawares?"

"I think so, mister," replied Lem. "I kin lead ye ter the place, all right, but I dunno 'bout ther res' uv et."

"Well, we'll look out for the rest of it. You lead us to the spot and that is all we will ask of you."

"All right, mister; cum erlong with me."

Lem led the way into the timber, the soldiers following, leading their horses. When they had penetrated to a distance of fifty yards, Lem stopped and told the captain that he had better leave the horses. "Et'll be imberble ter git ennywhur near ter them fellers ef ye g ther hosses erlong," he said.

The men then tied their horses to trees and the party moved forward. Lem led the way and presently within one hundred yards of the point where the party of youths had been secreted. He signaled the captain to stop, and then peered in the direction where the youths had been. He could see nothing of them, and did not know what to think of it.

"Do you see them?" asked the captain, in a cautious

"No, I don' see enny uv 'em," was the reply; "an' I don' unnerstan' et, eether. I don' see whur they kin be."

"Do you think they have gone away?" in a disappointed tone.

"I'm afeerd they hev."

"Jove! I hope not. I would have liked to have got a chance at them! We would have killed them all! We wouldn't have left one alive to tell the story!"

At this instant there came the command, in a clear, ringing voice: "Fire, boys! Give it to the cowardly scoundrels!"

Then the crash of a volley from rifles broke upon the air, and a number of the redcoats fell to the earth, dead or wounded.

## CHAPTER IX.

### "THE LIBERTY BOYS' DECOY."

When Dick Slater recognized Lem Larkins, and realized that the backwoods youth had played him false and had gone to the redcoats with information, he was surprised, as we have said, but was angry as well.

"It has turned out as Bob said it would," he said to himself; "Larkins, just as soon as he found himself out of danger from us, repented having told us about the coming of the redcoats, and to make himself square with them, has come and warned them that we have organized a company and are waiting in ambush. I have no doubt he has been playing the spy on us and knows just where the boys are stationed."

Dick was not close enough to hear what was said by Lem and the captain of the redcoat party, but he used his eyes to good advantage, and when he saw the party leave the road and enter the timber, under the leadership of the backwoods youth, he knew what it meant.

"They are going to try to take us by surprise, instead of allowing themselves to be taken that way. Lem is going to lead them to the spot where he knows the boys are stationed. Well, we will see! Perhaps we may be able to fool Mr. Larkins and give the redcoats a surprise, after all!"

Dick lost not an instant, but hastened back to where the youths were and told them what he had discovered.

"We have no time to lose; come over here, boys, and conceal yourselves; and then, when the redcoats put in an appearance we will give them at least one good volley."

Dick led the way. He knew in which direction the



redcoats would come from, and gave a good guess as to where they would pause in order to investigate, and he arranged his men so that they would be able to fire upon the enemy from the left side, and then retreat, if necessary, toward the home of the Millers.

It turned out that his judgment was excellent, for the redcoats came to a stop almost exactly on the spot where Dick had figured they would.

He saw Lem and the captain talking and stretching their necks and gazing in the direction where Lem knew the youths had been concealed, and making up his mind that there would not be a better opportunity for striking the redcoats a blow, he gave the youths the signal to take aim. They did so, and when he was sure they had got good aim he gave the command: "Fire, boys! Give it to the cowardly scoundrels!"

The youths fired instantly, and, as we have seen, they did considerable execution. In fact, so sudden and unexpected had come the blow that the redcoats were almost paralyzed with amazement and horror. They stood still and stared in the direction from which the volley had come, and Dick seized the opportunity and gave the youths the signal to fire a volley with their pistols. The youths were as cool as old veterans, and drew their pistols, took aim and fired with as much sang froid, almost, as if they were firing at a target. The result was that they dropped several more redcoats and created still more consternation in the enemy's ranks.

"Now, fall back!" was the order Dick sent along the line, and the youths obeyed, moving back promptly and with celerity, but almost noiselessly, and by the time the redcoats recovered from the stupor into which the sudden attack had thrown them, Dick and his men were well back out of danger.

The redcoats, when they did finally awaken, drew their pistols and rushed toward the spot where they supposed they would find the enemy—only to be disappointed; the enemy was not there.

This gave them new courage; if the enemy was fleeing from them the enemy must be afraid of them. This was the way they figured it, and they rushed onward, wildly, looking all around for some signs of the fugitives.

They could see no signs of the enemy, and finally they came to a stop. "Where can they have gone?" asked the captain, looking questioningly at Lem.

The youth shook his head. "I dunno," he replied, "'less they've gone back ter ther home uv ther Millers. Joe Miller is in ther gang, an' I 'xpect thet is whur they've gone."

"How far is it from here?"

"'Bout three miles; mebbly on'y two an' er ha'f."

"And you think they have gone there?"

"I shouldn't wunder."

"Well, then, we will go there. That is a game that can play."

"Yas, thet's right."

The captain then gave the order for the party to turn to where the encounter had taken place, and this done. It was found that seven of the soldiers had been killed, and eight wounded. While they were attending to the needs of the wounded men the redcoats heard the sound of hoofbeats and the captain and Lem Larkins ran over the road to see who the horsemen could be.

"Et's thet feller, Dick Dornely, an' ther ban' uv yo fellers thet we hev be'n huntin'!" gasped Lem.

"Are you sure?" asked the captain.

"Yas, sartin shore!"

"But I thought you said they were on foot."

"So they wuz."

"Then where did they get those horses?"

"Didn' ye notus thet each wun uv them fellers ridin' er hoss an' leadin' anuther?" asked Lem.

The captain started. "Yes, I noticed that. Whut of 'W'y nothin' mutch, on'y—I shouldn't wunder if theer hosses air your'n, whut ye lef' tied ter trees yender on ther other side uv ther hill!"

"Do you really think so?" exclaimed the captain.

"Waal, et wouldn't s'prise me er bit."

"We must go and see at once! Come; we will ha over to where we left our horses, and if those yo scoundrels have stolen them, I pity them, that's all!"

"Whut'll ye do ter 'em, cap'n?" asked Lem.

"I'll kill every mother's son of them!"

"I hope ye will!"

The two hastened back to where the others were, the captain communicated his fears to the men. "For you stay here with the wounded men," he ordered; "rest of us will go back and see if our horses have stolen."

He named the four who were to remain, and then, the rest, hurried away. It did not take them many minutes to reach the spot where the horses had been left, as he had feared and more than half expected, he found that the horses were gone. Not one remained.

If ever there was an angry man it was the British tain. He raved and almost tore his hair. He uttered curses both loud and deep. He threatened in a way that was terrible to listen to, and Lem became impressed



idea that Dick and the youths who had taken the horses as good as dead and buried.

The captain seemed at a loss to make up his mind just to do, however. He became silent and pondered the situation for some time, and at last gave the order to turn to where the four were. Here they stopped, and the captain again gave the matter some thought, ending by asking Lem how far it was to the nearest house.

"Bout ha'f er mile," was the reply.

"Who lives there—rebels or loyal people?"

"I think they're loyal people, cap'n," was the reply.

"Good! Then we will carry our wounded comrades to the house, leave them there, get a spade and return and bury our dead, after which we will go to the home of the Millers and make those rebel scoundrels wish they had never been born!"

This was done; the people in the house in question were notified, and said they would take care of the wounded men, and do the best for them that they could. Then, having borrowed a couple of spades, the redcoats returned to the place where the encounter had taken place and buried their dead comrades.

"Now," said the captain, "we are ready to go after the rebels. Come on, boys; we will make them wish they had let our horses alone!"

They set out and walked rapidly up the road. Lem was not thinking the matter over and he finally said to the captain: "Say, hedn't we better send sum men on erhead to scoutin' aroun'? Them fellers might ambush

This struck the captain as being good advice. "I don't know but you are right," he said. "Those fellows are pretty smart, as we have already had proof."

Then he named two men and told them to go on ahead to beat up the timber on both sides of the road very carefully. "We don't want to give them another chance," the captain said; "so go slow, and be sure you don't overlook them."

The men set out and were soon lost to sight. The captain waited perhaps ten minutes, and then gave the word to all to advance. "We will go slow, however," he said, "we don't want to get ahead of our scouts."

They moved slowly onward, up the road, and when they were within three-quarters of a mile of the Miller home, the scouts suddenly put in an appearance.

They were both excited, and when the captain asked them what the matter was, one replied: "The deuce is to it, captain!"

"Explain," the officer said.

"All right; we went on up the road till we came in sight of the home of the Millers, and there we saw something that surprised us."

"What was it?"

"A regular little army!"

"A what?"

"A little army, compared to our force; I judge that there are nearly two hundred of them."

"Two hundred rebels?"

"Yes."

The captain looked amazed. Then he turned to Lem. "I thought you said there were only twenty-three of those fellows," he said.

Lem nodded. "That's whut I sed," he admitted; "an' that's all theer wuz uv 'em, too, w'en I saw 'em."

"What is the meaning of this strong show of force seen by the boys, then? Where did the rest of the force come from?"

Lem shook his head. "Ye kain't prove et by me," he said.

"You have no idea who they are, then?"

"Nope, not ther leest idee."

"There are not that many rebel men and youths in these parts, are there?"

"No; I think thet twenty-three wuz erbout all uv 'em."

"Then where did these others come from—ah! I have an idea! Didn't you say that one of the two young strangers mounted his horse and rode away toward the north this morning?"

Lem nodded. "Yas, I sed thet; an' he done et, too!"

"Then that explains the affair. He went to get the reinforcements, and has returned with them."

"I guess ye're right," agreed Lem.

"I am sure that I am right; and now the question is: What shall we do?"

The men nodded their heads. That was the question, sure enough. They could not hope to cope with such a strong force when they had only about thirty-five men.

"There is only one thing to do," said the captain, after a few minutes' thought; "we must return to the home of the loyalist where we left the wounded men, and then we will borrow a horse, and one of you men must return to Savannah and get reinforcements. We must have at least as strong a force as the rebels have, and then we will be all right."

This met with the approval of all. They had no stomach for fighting against such a strong force, and were well pleased when the captain gave the order to "Right-about, face, and forward, march!"

Three-quarters of an hour later they reached the home



of the Tory, whose name was Henry Joyce. When the captain asked him if he would lend them a horse, Mr. Joyce said certainly.

A horse was quickly bridled and saddled, and one of the men mounted and rode away at a gallop, carrying with him a message to the commandant at Savannah, asking that at least one hundred and fifty men be sent to the assistance of the captain and his men.

The messenger rode at a gallop all the way, and got to Savannah an hour before sundown. He went at once to headquarters and handed the message to General Prevost, who read it with darkening brow.

"What is this?" he exclaimed, when he had finished. "You don't mean to say that some rebels actually dared to attack your force, and that they succeeded in killing seven and wounding eight of your men, and then got safely away?"

The messenger bowed. "Yes, sir," he replied; "they did that very thing."

"How did it happen?"

The soldier explained.

"Humph!" grunted General Prevost, when the soldier had finished, "it seems to me as if Captain Chalmers used very poor judgment in allowing himself to be taken by surprise, after having been warned that the rebels were there."

Of course, the soldier did not dare defend the captain, and he reasoned that it was not any of his business, anyway, so he said nothing.

"And the captain says there is a strong force of rebels there and asks that I send at least one hundred and fifty men to his assistance. Now, who are those rebels, and where did they come from?"

The soldier shook his head. "It is hard to say, sir," he replied.

"You are sure the rebels are there?"

It happened that the messenger was one of the two who had been sent ahead to do scouting duty, and he replied promptly: "Oh, yes; they're there! I saw them with my own eyes."

"Ah, you did?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you think there are as many of the rebels as what the captain says?"

"His statement is based on what I and one of my comrades who had been sent ahead to do scouting duty told him," the soldier replied.

"Then you think there are one hundred and fifty of the rebels?"

"At least that number, sir."

"Humph! Well, I guess I will send the men—hundred and fifty, with the thirty-five men he should be sufficient to handle the saucy rebels, I say."

"Oh, yes, I am sure of it, sir."

"Very well; I will give the orders that the men be ready and start at the earliest possible moment. You to return with them, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well."

The messenger then took his leave, and went to the quarters occupied by his company. He did not have to wait, however, as the party of men was quickly gathered up, and, under his guidance, was soon riding northward at a gallop.

An hour and a half later they arrived at the farmhouse, and were greeted joyously by Captain Chalmers.

"Ah, you are here!" he exclaimed. "Now those rebels will have to look out for themselves!"

The captain was anxious to strike the "rebels" at the earliest possible moment, and he could not wait the next day to do it, so he named four men to go ahead as scouts; and when they had got a good start he followed with the entire force of nearly two hundred men.

They moved slowly, and when they had gone some distance to the home of the Millers, without having seen any sign of the enemy, they hardly knew what to think. Still onward they moved, and at last they stood in the rear front of the farmhouse, and still they had seen no sign of the enemy.

All was dark and still in the farmhouse. Evidently the inmates were in bed and sound asleep. Everything was quiet and calm and peaceful.

"I don't understand it," said the captain, in a discontented voice; "I don't see where those rebels can be."

The captain was silent for a while, and seemed to be pondering the situation. Presently he gave the command for the men to dismount. They did so, and then ordered them to enter the yard. "We will arouse the rebels of the house," he said, "and if he is saucy we will knock his house down over his head. He is a rebel, and we will stand anything from him. I am going to try to get him to tell me where the rebels have gone."

Scarcely had the men entered the yard when the beats of a horse were heard. The horse was coming from the north and was traveling at a rapid pace. The captain paused and stared out toward the road. It was



nely dark night, but it was dark enough so that things not be seen at all distinctly.

ny watched, however, and saw a horseman suddenly in sight. They could not see him distinctly, but he ding like the wind and dashed past without slackening in the least.

fter him!" suddenly cried Captain Chalmers. "After He is one of the rebels, without doubt, and if we capture him we can make him tell where the others

e men were out of the yard in a jiffy, and, bounding their saddles, dashed after the horseman.

le did they dream that they were following a decoy, hat they were riding right into a trap.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE REDCOATS DEFEATED.

er striking the redcoats the blow, Dick and his little had returned to the home of the Millers, as we have He believed the redcoats would attempt to get even ning and making an attack on them, so began look- ound for a good place to take up their position and he enemy at bay. While he was at this he happened nee up the road and saw a party of horsemen coming. he 'Liberty Boys'!" he exclaimed, recognizing them tly. "Now we will be all right; and if the redcoats us they will think they have run into a hornet's ure enough!"

as indeed the "Liberty Boys," and Bob was at their ey had ridden down this way six or seven miles," plained, "and so I didn't have to go so far."

hat was lucky," said Dick; "I am expecting an at- rom the redcoats within the hour, and now we will e to give them such a reception as they are not ex- g."

"Liberty Boys" and the youths under Dick—the oods young men—soon got acquainted with one an- and all enjoyed themselves in a social way while ng the coming of the redcoats.

k waited patiently, but when more than an hour apsed and the redcoats had not put in an appear- ae began to grow restless and suspicious.

egins to look as if they had discovered that we have

been reinforced," he said; "and in that case they will not attack us."

"It looks that way," agreed Bob.

"I'll tell you what you do," said Dick; "Bob, you and Sam go on a scouting expedition, and when you have discovered where the redcoats are and why they have not put in an appearance, come back and report."

"All right, Dick."

"Be careful and don't let them capture you."

"We'll look out for them."

Bob and Sam set out and were gone two hours. When they returned they reported to Dick that the redcoats were at a farmhouse three miles distant, and that one of the redcoats had ridden away toward the south at a gallop.

"He has gone to Savannah for reinforcements," said Dick.

Bob nodded. "That is the way I sized the affair up," he said. "They have learned that we have been reinforced, and they are going to do the same thing."

"That looks as if we were to have some lively times around here soon—eh, Bob?"

"You are right; well, I am ready."

"And I. I would just as soon have a fight with the redcoats as not."

Dick and Bob talked the situation over, and it was decided to keep watch on the redcoats at the farmhouse and see how many men came to reinforce them. Bob suggested that they make an attack on the force before the reinforcements came, but Dick decided not to do so. He did not believe the British commander at Savannah would send more than one hundred men, and he felt that his force would be more than capable of administering a thrashing to the redcoats, even after they were reinforced.

"Then they won't have it to say that we attacked and slaughtered a small force," said Dick; "if we did do it, it might make them much worse in their treatment of the patriots in the vicinity of Savannah. If we thrash an equal number they will not have any reason for feeling very angry over the affair."

Bob acknowledged that there was reason in what Dick said, and so it was decided that they would not attack the small force of redcoats, but would wait and engage the entire party, after being reinforced.

This decided, Dick sent two of the youths, with instructions, to keep a close watch, and when the reinforcements put in an appearance to make a careful estimate of their number, find out, if possible, what they intended doing, and then come and report. The youths, having received their instructions, set out.



They returned at a quarter to ten o'clock and reported that the redcoats were coming.

"How many of them are there?" asked Dick.

"There are nearly two hundred of them!" was the reply.

Dick was surprised. "So many as that?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; and they are not more than half a mile away."

Dick hardly knew what to do. Two hundred was quite a strong force, and if met on an equal footing would likely prove too strong for his force, which consisted of the one hundred "Liberty Boys" and twenty-two backwoods youths. Of course, Dick was not afraid that his force would get thrashed, but if he met the redcoats on anything like an equal footing, a number of his men would undoubtedly be killed and wounded, and this was something he wished to avoid. Dick was careful of the lives of his men, and it was this that made him so well liked by all.

Dick thought the matter over quickly. There was no point between the Miller home and where the redcoats were that they could be ambushed, but a quarter of a mile farther on was a splendid place, and Dick's mind was quickly made up.

"Bob," he said, "take half a dozen of the boys, and one horse, and go up the road in a northerly direction a quarter of a mile or so. Make a dummy, by stuffing a coat and pair of trousers with straw, and tie this dummy on the back of the horse. Then start the horse down the road in this direction at a gallop. We will use the dummy as a decoy, and the redcoats will, no doubt, give chase, thinking it one of us, and a messenger going for reinforcements, or something like that, and they will thus be led straight into a trap, for I and the rest of the boys will hasten, by a roundabout course, to a point three-quarters of a mile up the road, and there we will be when the redcoats put in an appearance, and will give them a reception such as they will not be expecting."

"Ah, you are going to bait the British, eh, Dick?" exclaimed Bob. "That is a good scheme."

Then he selected five companions, and taking a horse, some old clothes and some straw, they hastened away up the road, while Dick and the main party stole away in the opposite direction, but keeping well back in the timber. Mr. Miller's folks, acting in accordance with instructions from Dick, put out the lights and closed and barred the doors.

Bob and his five comrades went up the road a distance of a third of a mile, and then went to work. It was not the first time they had ever done such work, and it did not take them long to stuff the clothing with straw and rig up a dummy that might easily be mistaken for a human

being in the darkness. They then placed the dummy on the back of the horse, tied it there in such a manner that it would remain in an upright position, and then all was ready.

The "Liberty Boys" threw their hats in the air and shouted with delight as they looked at the dummy. "That will fool the British," said Bob, as he struck the horse with a whip; "it is a fine decoy."

The horse was a mettlesome animal, and leaped forward with a snort of anger and displeasure. It galloped into the darkness, and the farther it went the faster it traveled, for it seemed to instinctively know that the thing on its back was not a human being, and was frightened. Onward the horse dashed, and as we have seen it passed the Miller home like a streak, and the redcoats, mistaking it a rebel messenger or spy, leaped upon their horses and gave chase. So the decoy was successful, and leading the British straight into a trap; they had been baited and had taken the bait like gudgeons.

Onward they dashed, lashing their horses to their sides with speed, in their efforts to overtake the supposed "rebel messenger." And soon they had gone a distance of three-quarters of a mile. They were now at the point where Dick and his force were secreted, and of a sudden a sheet of flame burst forth from among the bushes and trees at the road, and a hail of bullets tore through the ranks of the rebels, and tumbled a score or more to the ground.

The British realized now that they had been led into a trap by a decoy, and they instantly brought their horses to a stop. "Dismount!" roared Captain Chalmers. "We will have the rebels, now, and will wipe them off the face of the earth. Dismount, and charge the scoundrels!"

Crash—roar! another volley rang out, this being the pistols of the "Liberty Boys," and considerable damage was done; a dozen redcoats going down, dead or wounded.

"Fall back, boys!" called out Dick. "Fall back, boys! Load as you go!"

Dick did not wish to come to close quarters with the enemy, as in that case many of his brave boys would inevitably lose their lives, hence the order to fall back.

The youths obeyed and moved back through the timber, loading their muskets as they went. The redcoats, as they were on the ground, fired a volley, but their shot did no particular damage.

Then the British charged into the timber, but found nobody there, and they realized that they had a strong enemy to deal with. "Forward!" yelled Captain Chalmers. "Forward! We will catch those scoundrels yet and then wish they had never been born!"



but this was easier said than done. The redcoats moved forward as rapidly as they could, but could not overtake "Liberty Boys." Finding that this could not be done, the captain gave the order to halt; and scarcely had the redcoats stopped when another volley was poured into their ranks by the "Liberty Boys."

"Curses upon the scoundrels!" roared Captain Chalmers, as he had himself been slightly wounded. "Charge, and give them the bayonet!"

The redcoats obeyed, in so far as charging was concerned, but they could not "give the enemy the bayonet" for the reason that they could not find the enemy. The "Liberty Boys" had immediately fallen back, and thus were enabled to keep out of the way of the British.

The captain realized finally that he could not get at the rebels, and gave the order to halt and return to the road. Dick was determined to strike the British a severe blow, and as he was at it, so as soon as he learned that the redcoats had given up the pursuit and returned to the road, he gave the order for the youths to make a half circuit and approach the enemy from the opposite direction.

This plan was carried out. The youths made a half circuit, crossing the road at a point two hundred yards from where the enemy was, and then they came on around the edge of the timber on the opposite side of the road from where they had been when they first attacked the redcoats.

It was quite dark, but the dark mass of redcoats could be distinguished in the road, and the youths took aim and gave the signal from Dick, fired. The volley was fired at such a range that terrible execution was done, and shrieks, cries and curses went up from the lips of the wounded and those who were not injured. The volley had come so unexpectedly that it was terrifying to the British.

At this time, instead of charging toward the point where the enemy was, the redcoats fled into the timber at the opposite side of the road, in utter confusion and disorder. When they were there, however, and sheltered by the bushes and trees, their courage returned sufficiently so that they fired a volley. As Dick had given the word, and the youths retired, however, the volley did but little damage; two or three of the youths receiving slight flesh wounds and nothing more.

Dick now made up his mind to return to the Miller home and go into camp for the night. He thought that they had struck the British a hard enough blow for once, and would wait and see what they would do.

"They may give it up and return to Savannah," he said to Bob; "and in that case we will have done all that is

necessary, as we will have saved the homes of the patriots from being destroyed."

"True," agreed Bob; and then they made their way back to the Miller home and went into camp. A double set of guards were put out so as to make it impossible for the redcoats to surprise them, and all rolled themselves up in their blankets and went to sleep.

All was quiet during the rest of the night, and next morning Dick sent a couple of the youths to spy on the British and see what they were about.

The two were gone about three hours, and then returned with the information that the remnant of the British force had taken its departure, going toward Savannah.

"I guess they have given up," said Dick; "they got such a severe blow that they don't feel like trying to cope with us."

"And what will we do, Dick?"

"Well, I think that I shall let the boys remain here in camp and you and I can go ahead with our work of spying on the British and find the best avenues of approach in trying to reach Savannah with the patriot army. When we have found out anything of importance I can send a messenger to General Lincoln, you know."

"That's right; this is a very good place for us to have our headquarters."

While they were talking Jim Sheppard came to them and said: "I guess thet ef ye hev no 'bjeckshuns, I'll go hum, Dick. I expeck ther folks'll be uneasy, an'll want ter heer whut we hev done ter ther redcoats."

"That's all right, Jim," said Dick, heartily; "go right along. We won't need you, I am sure."

"I guess you want to see Mrs. Sheppard, Jim!" said Bob, banteringly, and Jim grinned and nodded.

"Yer right erbout thet, Bob," he admitted; "I do kinder want ter see Molly, thet's er fack."

"And she is no doubt wanting to see you, Jim," said Dick; "so go right along—and, by the way, there will be no need of the rest of the boys staying here, either. Tell them they can go to their homes; but tell them also that they may hold themselves in readiness to come to our assistance at a moment's warning. We may have to give battle to a strong force of British before very long."

"All right; I'll tell 'em, Dick. An' ye kin be shore thet they'll be reddy ter cum at ther word. The taste they hev got uv fightin' hez kinder sot theer blood ter goin' faster; an' they will be glad uv er chance ter fight thier redcoats."

"All right, Jim; in case I should want them I will let you now, and then you can get the word to them."



"All right, Dick."

Ten minutes later the backwoods boys dispersed to their various homes, and Dick and Bob began making preparations for a trip down in the vicinity of Savannah.

Jim Sheppard was perhaps halfway home when he suddenly encountered Lem Larkins. He had cut through the timber in order to shorten the distance, and had encountered Lem at a bend in the path.

At sight of Jim, Lem gave utterance to an exclamation of rage and fear commingled, and would have turned aside and avoided a meeting, but Jim would not have it so. He knew that Lem had played the traitor to his promise to Dick and Bob, and had gone to the British and informed them of the fact that the youths were in ambush, and he quickly made up his mind that he would punish the fellow. There was bad blood between the two, anyway, and Jim was rather glad of an excuse for picking a quarrel with Lem.

"Hol' on, Lem Larkins!" he cried, "don' be in er hurry ter git erway. I hev sumthin' ter say ter ye."

"Whut is et?" asked Lem, sullenly, pausing and facing Jim.

"I'll tell ye: Ther other day ye promised Dick Slater an' Bob Estabrook thet ye would leeve ther side uv ther king an' be er patriot, didn' ye?"

"Yas, I did; an' whut uv et?"

"Jes' this: Ye didn' keep yer prommus."

"How d'ye know?"

"Becos Dick saw ye tellin' ther British thet we wuz layin' in ambush fur 'em, thet's how I know et."

"Waal," said Lem, with a sneer, "whut ye goin' ter do erbout et?"

"I'm goin' ter giv' ye ther worst lickin' ye ever hed in all yer life!"

"Ye meen thet ye'll try."

"No, I mean thet I'll do et; an' I hain't goin' ter fool erway enny time erbout et, eether. Look out fur yerse'f, Lem Larkins!"

Jim leaped forward and attacked Lem with all his energy. In an instant the two were engaged in a battle royal. Both were strong, lusty fellows, and neither had any idea of science; it was simply strength against strength. It was a rough-and-tumble fight and it was soon evident that Jim was too much for Lem. He got that worthy down and pounded him till he yelled lustily for quarter.

"I'm whipped! I'm whipped! I giv' up, Jim!" Lem cried. "Stop! Don' hit me enny more! Ye hurt me turribly!"

"All right, Lem Larkins," said Jim as he rose to his

feet and permitted his late opponent to get up. now I wanten tell ye sumthin': Ef ye know w'en ye off ye won't hev nothin' more ter do with ther re D'ye unnerstan'?"

"I hain't ergoin' ter hev nothin' ter do with ther enny more," said Lem sullenly; "nur with ther p neether."

"All right; ef ye stay nootral I shan't say ennythin' ef ye he'p ther British enny way—look out!"

Then Jim walked on in the direction of his home, leaving Lem glaring after him with eyes of hate. "I—ter kill 'im!" he grated. "An' ef he don' look out, take et inter my head ter do et some time, too!"

When Jim reached home he was greeted with hugs and kisses from Molly, and felt that he was the happiest fellow in all Georgia. He told her and his parents that the patriots had whipped the British, and his folks were delighted by the news.

Next day Jim saw Dick at the encampment of the "Liberty Boys," and told him about meeting Lem Larkins and giving him a thrashing.

"Good! I'm glad you did that, Jim!" he said. "It has saved me the trouble. Perhaps he will behave better from now on."

"I think he will," said Jim; "an' ef he don't, I'll be sure 'im till he kain't stan' up!"

"Bully for you, Jim!" said Bob. "You are all right."

The "Liberty Boys" remained in that vicinity till the attempt had been made by the patriot army to take Savannah—the attempt resulting, unfortunately, in failure—and then they returned to the North.

THE END.

The next number (71) of "The Liberty Boys" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' LURE: THE SNARE THE ENEMY SET," by Harry

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